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[See page 6

I DINE QUICKLY, THEN TRY TO READ, BUT I DO NOT COMPREHEND THE WORDS

THE CONTINENTAL CLASSICS

VOLUME XV

MODERN GHOSTS

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED FROM THE WORKS OF GUY DE MAUPASSANT, PEDRO ANTONIO DE ALARCÓN, ALEXANDER L. KIELLAND, LEOPOLD KOMPERT, GUSTAVO ADOLFO BECQUER, AND GIOVANNI MAGHERINI-GRAZIANI

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS

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INTRODUCTION.

In the first paper of the *Sketch-Book*, which describes the Atlantic voyage, Irving says that when the weather, which had been fair, changed to a wild and threatening aspect, the passengers gathered towards evening in the cabin, where the gloom was made ghastlier by the dull light of a lamp, and every one told his tale of shipwreck and disaster. On the longer voyage, on which we are embarked, when our thoughts are turned to the night side of nature, as Robert Dale Owen called it, we likewise are all apt to fall to telling the grewsome tales which are known as ghost stories. They have a strange and subtle fascination. The imagination, quickened by suggestions of mysterious sounds and supernatural presences, fills the young listener with horror, and his older

companions with a sense of mystery and awe. For the child the upward path to bed through darkened passages and solitary halls is peopled with terrors worse than dragons and visible monsters, for they are phantoms of dread against whose malign power there is no sovereign amulet.

The sufferings of the child sent severely to encounter all alone such fears and figments of the fancy are indescribable. They are recalled through the actual trials of later years as more grievous and appalling than they, and many a man and woman pities the forlorn little figures that once they were, cowering and shivering in that early purgatory of terror which the ghost story created. Later they begin to ask whether those harrowing apprehensions, that inexplicable awe, were, after all, only fanciful. The man, of whom the child is father, as he grows wiser comes to learn that all he knows is that he knows little. He sees the succession of the seasons, the systole and disastole of the visible heart of beauty, but the secret of its life still hides from his gaze. If one enlightenment conceives the tortoise on which the elephant stands, another advances to protoplasm, but no further.

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting."

The most refined psychological speculation may extend the range of observation. But the "mocking laughter" of desert places, the cry of the banshee, the sudden impression of a presence, the strange and fanciful popular superstitions, as they are called, in the same way that unapprehended physical conditions are sagely called nervous prostration—what is the key to them all? What is a hallucination? Who shall say conclusively that it is the thing that is not? And if it be, whence is it, and why?

The literature of ghosts is very ancient. In visions of the night, and in the lurid vapors of mystic incantations, figures rise and smile, or frown and disappear. The Witch of Endor murmurs her spell, and "an old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle." Macbeth takes a bond of fate, and from Hecate's caldron, after the apparition of an armed head and that of a bloody child, "an apparition of a child crowned, with a tree in his hand, rises." The wizard recounts to Lochiel his warning vision, and Lochiel departs to his doom. There are stories of the Castle of Otranto and of the Three Spaniards, and the infinite detail of "singular experiences," which make our conscious daily life the frontier

and border-land of an impinging world of mystery.

But these stories have no conscious law. They are like fantastic or horrible dreams. Did the writer suffer from nightmare? Or are they but fairy tales reversed? For airy Titania has some evil fate given us the Tall Woman, and tricksy Ariel have we exchanged for Caliban? There is indeed a record of similar recurring phenomena that may seem to imply some law. There is the persistent story of the friend who suddenly appears in the room or at the door, or whom, awaking, you see by your bedside, only to learn afterwards that at the same moment in a distant land he died. There is the family spectre, whose appearance foretells death to the luckless member of the family who sees it. Does some sudden physical pang, some mortal premonition, recall the legend, and instantly he believes that he sees the messenger of doom?

The fascination of this realm of experience, which is traditional from age to age, yet always elusive, is undeniable. Few men have seen ghosts, or will confess that they have seen them. But almost everybody knows some one of the few. Haunted houses are familiar in all neighborhoods, with the

same story of the roistering sceptic who will gladly pass the night alone in the haunted chamber, and give monsieur the ghost a warm welcome, but who, if not found dead in the morning, emerges pale and haggard, with a settled terror in his look, and his lips sealed forever upon the awful story of the night.

Mansions in country places are advertised for sale or hire, with the attraction of a well-regulated ghost, who contents himself with driving up at midnight with a great clatter of outriders, and rumble of wheels, and brisk letting down of steps, and a bustling entrance into the house, and then no more. Staid gentlemen remember in their youth awaking in a friend's house in the summer night just in time to see the vanishing through the long window of a draped figure; a momentary pausing on the balcony outside; the sense of a penetrating, mournful look; then a vanishing; and at breakfast the cheery question of the host, "Did you see the lovely Lady Rosamond?" and a following tale of hapless love and woe.

The delirium of fever, if only we knew what it is, and an unbalanced mind, and an excited imagination, are all devices more or less unsatisfactory, and as mysterious as the

ghosts themselves, to explain the realm of ghost or fairy. Where these cannot be assumed, dyspepsia may be invoked as the witch who mingles and stirs the caldron. But science loves to speculate upon so ancient and strange a system of phenomena, or statements of alleged phenomena, and to try to reduce to order and marshal in well-disciplined ranks these coy and evanescent hints of something that eludes exactness of observation and defies acute analysis. The meritorious effort recalls the line of Shelley describing the clouds as

"Shepherded by the slow unwilling wind."

Science, indeed, is not unwilling. Her ministers are ready to try the haunted chamber, and to bring the Lady Rosamond to the most rigid investigation. But will she smile upon the philosophers and surrender, who has only looked sadly upon the poets and disappeared? The Society for Psychical Research, however, is not daunted, and does not despair of helping the sun to rise upon the night side of nature. Several years since it began to collect a census of hallucinations, of which the responsibility was assumed last summer by the International Congress of Experimental Psychology at Paris.

The object is twofold—to obtain a mass of facts about hallucination which may serve as a basis for scientific study of such phenomena, and also to ascertain the number of persons who have had experience of them. The question of the census sheet is very simple: "Have you ever, when completely awake, had a vivid impression of seeing or being touched by a living being or an inanimate object, or hearing a voice, which impression, so far as you could discover, was not due to any external physical cause?" Some eight thousand persons in England, France, and the United States have already responded, and the congress hopes that at its next meeting in England, in 1892, there may have been not less than fifty thousand answers collected. Professor William James, of Harvard University, has been selected to superintend the American branch of the census.

No more timely, striking, and interesting illustration of these phenomena, the intimations, impressions, apparitions, which are familiarly described as supernatural, can be found than the collection of little tales in this volume. It is the most modern and contemporary contribution to the literature of ghosts, selected from authors in various

parts of Europe—Norway, France, Spain, Austria, Italy—all of them masters in their way, and of that sympathetic and delicate lightness of touch which is indispensable to the happiest treatment of such themes. One of the writers, Guy de Maupassant, is already well known in this country from the little collection of tales, *The Odd Number*, and from Mr. Henry James's charming essay of introduction. Another name which will have great interest for many readers is that of Becquer, a Spaniard, who died in 1870, only thirty-four years old, whose tales are full of the sentiment and legend of his country, and some of whose verses, especially the "Swallows," a tenderly passionate love-song, breathing the sadness of the poet's life and temperament, have been very felicitously translated into English. Another of our authors, an Italian, Giovanni Magherini-Graziani, is still a young man, living pleasantly at a villa near Florence. In 1871 he published his most important work, a life of Michael Angelo. He has published, also, two or three small volumes of tales and essays, and is actively engaged in literary work.

The tales that compose this volume show how universally the old spell of "the super-

natural" still lingers. The fair Lady Rosamond, vanishing in the summer moonlight on the balcony of a New England country-house, she or some loathlier denizen of the same uncomprehended sphere, appears on a river in France or in a street in Spain. The old man covered with a mantle still cometh up. The child crowned, with a tree in his hand, still rises. And still we gaze entranced, and like the child shuddering through weirdly peopled shadows to his solitary chamber, we are conscious of the uncanny spell, and of the spectral realm in which we move.

These little tales, like instant photographs, bring us nearer to the life of other lands, and apprise us that, in an unexpected sense, we are all of one blood—a blood which is chilled by an influence that we cannot comprehend, and at a contact of which we are conscious by an apprehension beyond that of the senses.

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

September, 1890.

THE HORLA.

BY

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

THE HORLA.

. . . . . .

May 8th.

WHAT a magnificent day! I spent the whole morning stretched on the grass, before my house, under the great plane-tree which entirely covers, shelters, and shades it. I love this country, and I love to live here, because here I have my roots, those deep, fine roots which attach a man to the soil where his forefathers were born and buried, which attach him to what is thought there and to what is eaten, to its customs as to its dishes, to its localisms of speech, to the peculiar intonation of its peasants, to the smell of its earth, of its villages, of its very air.

I love the house where I have grown up. From my windows I see the Seine, flowing by my garden; on the other side of the road, almost on my own property:—the great, wide Seine that goes to Havre from Rouen, covered with the passing boats.

To the left, down there, Rouen—the great city of blue roofs swarming far and wide below a crowd of pointed Gothic bell-towers. These, ponderous or slender, are innumerable, overtowered by the cathedral's cast-iron spire, and filled with bells which ring in the blue air on fine mornings. Their sweet and distant iron humming, their brazen chant, reaches out to me, brought by the breeze, and now louder, now lower, as the breeze now wakes, now drowses.

How fine it was this morning!

About eleven o'clock, I remember, a long tow of ships defiled past my garden railings. They were pulled by a tug the size of a fly; it groaned and vomited forth a thick, black smoke.

Just behind two English schooners, whose red flag waved against the sky, came a superb Brazilian three-master, quite white, ad-

mirably clean and shining. This ship gave me so much pleasure that I saluted her, I don't know why.

May 12th.

For some days I have had a little fever; I feel unwell, or rather, properly speaking, I feel depressed.

Whence come these mysterious influences which change our happiness into discouragement and our confidence into distress? One would almost say that the air, the invisible air, was full of unknowable Powers, to whose mysterious proximity we submit. I awake full of gayety, with desires to sing in my throat. Why? I go down to the waterside, and suddenly, after a short walk, return distressed, as though some misfortune awaited me at home. Why? Is it a shiver of cold which, brushing across my skin, has unsettled my nerves and darkened my soul? Is it the shapes of the clouds, or the colors of the day, or the changeable colors of things which have passed in through my eyes, and have troubled my thoughts? Do we know? Everything about us, everything which we see without observing, everything which we

brush against without recognizing, everything which we touch without feeling, everything which we encounter without clearly distinguishing, may have upon us, upon our senses, and, through them, upon our minds and upon our hearts, instant effects which are wonderful and not to be explained.

Ah! but it is deep, this mystery of the Invisible! No, we may not sound it with our wretched senses, with our eyes—which can perceive neither what is too small nor too great, nor too near nor too far, nor the inhabitants of a planet nor the inhabitants of a drop of water. And we may not sound it with our ears—which deceive us, transmitting air-waves in the form of sonorous notes. They are the fairies who perform the miracle of changing movement into sound, and by this metamorphosis they give birth to music and to Nature's dumb agitation the power of singing. No, we may not sound it with our sense of smell—feebler than that of the dog; nor with our taste—which can hardly discern the age of wine!

Ah, if we had only other organs which would perform in our favor other miracles

like that miracle of music, what new things we should discover all about our lives!

May 16th.

I am certainly ill. Last month I was so well! I have a fever, a dreadful fever, or rather a feeling of feverish enervation which causes my mind to suffer as much as my body. I experience that awful sense of some menacing danger, that apprehension of coming misfortune or approaching death, that curious presentiment which is no doubt really the stroke of a still unrecognized sickness germinating in body and in blood.

May 18th.

I have just been to consult my physician, for I was not able to sleep. He found my pulse rapid, my eye dilated, my nerves disturbed, but no alarming symptoms. I must take shower-baths and drink a little bromide of potassium.

May 25th.

No change. My condition is truly curious. With the approach of evening a strange anxiety invades me, as if the night concealed

for me some dreadful menace. I dine quickly, then try to read, but I do not comprehend the words. I barely distinguish the letters. Then I pace my drawing-room backward and forward, under the oppression of a confused and resistless fear, the fear of sleep and the fear of my bed.

Towards ten o'clock I go up-stairs to my room. As soon as I get inside the door I double-lock it and I push the bolts; I am afraid . . . of what? . . . Hitherto I feared nothing. . . . I open my closets, I look under my bed; I listen. . . . I listen for what? . . . Is it not strange that a simple indisposition, a difficulty in the circulation perhaps, an irritated nerve, a slight congestion, a little disturbance of the works of my delicate, imperfect human machinery, can out of a merry man make a melancholy one—out of a brave man make a coward? Then I go to bed, and I await sleep as one might await an executioner. I wait with terror for its coming. And my heart beats, and my limbs quiver, and my whole body trembles under the warmth of the bedclothes, until the moment when I fall suddenly into slumber, as

a man might fall, to drown himself, into a gulf of stagnant water. I do not feel sleep coming in the way I used to feel it coming—calmly. For this sleep, hidden somewhere near me, is perfidious, and it watches and will soon seize me by the head, and close my eyes, and destroy me.

I sleep long—two or three hours—then a dream—no, a nightmare grips me in its arms. I feel that I am in bed and that I am sleeping . . . I feel it and I know it. . . . and I also feel that some one approaches me, looks at me, touches me, mounts upon my bed, kneels upon my breast, seizes my neck in his hands and presses . . . presses . . . with all his force, to strangle me.

I—I writhe, bound fast by that awful powerlessness which paralyzes us in dreams. I desire to shout,—I cannot;—to move,—I cannot;—I try, with fearful efforts, panting, to turn myself, to throw off this being who is crushing and suffocating me;—I cannot.

And suddenly I awake, wild, covered with perspiration. I light a candle. I am alone.

After this crisis, which recurs every night, I sleep at last calmly until dawn.

June 2d.

My condition is still worse. What is the matter with me? The bromide has no effect; the shower-baths have no effect. Just now, in order to tire myself out (though Heaven knows I am languid enough already!) I went to walk in the forest of Roumare. I thought at first that the fresh, buoyant, balmy air, full of the perfume of herbs and leaves, was pouring new blood into my veins, new energy into my heart. I took a wide glade. Then I turned towards La Bouille, along a narrow *allée*, between two armies of great trees which built a thick, green, almost black roof between the sky and myself.

Suddenly a shiver seized me — not a shiver of cold, but a strange shiver of anguish.

I quickened my pace, uneasy at being alone in the wood, terrified without reason, stupidly, by the profound loneliness. All at once it seemed to me that I was being followed, that some one was treading on my heels, on the point—on the point—on the point of touching me.

I turned abruptly. I was alone. I saw behind me only the straight, wide glade—empty, high, fearfully empty; and in front of me also it stretched out of sight just the same—dreadful!

I closed my eyes. Why? And I began to turn round and round on my heel, quickly, like a top. I came near falling. I opened my eyes again; the trees danced; the earth swam; I was obliged to sit down. Then, of course, I no longer knew from which direction I had come! Fantastic thought! Strange! Fantastic thought! I set off to the right, and happened into the same avenue which had led me to the middle of the forest.

June 3d.

The night was horrible. I shall go away for a few weeks. A little journey will no doubt set me on my feet again.

July 2d.

At home again. I am cured; and, besides that, I have made a charming trip. I have visited Mont Saint Michel, where I had never been.

What a vision, when one arrives, as I did,

at Avranches towards the end of the day! The city is on a little hill; a guide took me to the public garden at the end of the town. A great bay stretched away before me out of sight, between two lonely shores which lost themselves far off in the mists; and in the midst of this immense yellow bay, beneath a golden and glittering sky, rose, sombre and pointed, a strange mount in the midst of the sands. The sun had just disappeared, and against the still flaming horizon there was designed the profile of that fantastic rock which bears upon its summit a fantastic monument.

By daybreak I was on my way towards it. The tide was low, as yesterday at evening, and I watched that wonder-arousing abbey growing taller and taller before me as I approached. After several hours of walking I reached the enormous block of stones which bears the little town dominated by the great church. Having ascended the narrow and steep street, I entered the most admirable Gothic dwelling which has ever been constructed for God on earth, vast as a city, full of low passages borne down by heavy

arches, of high galleries borne up by slender columns. I entered that gigantic granite jewel, light as a bit of lace, covered with towers and with slender belfries linked one to the other by fine-carved arches. They are climbed by twisting stair-ways, and they dart into the blue sky of day and into the black sky of night, their fantastic heads bristling with chimeras, with Devils, and with strange Beasts.

When I reached the top I said to the monk who accompanied me, "Father, you must be well off here."

He answered: "There's a great deal of wind, Monsieur;" and we fell into conversation while we watched the rising sea spread over the sand and cover it with a steely cuirass.

And the monk told me stories—all the old stories of the place—legends, always legends.

One of them impressed me very strongly. The country people, those of the mount, pretend that talking is heard on the sands by night, then the bleating of two goats, the one with a voice which is high, the other

with a voice which is deep. Unbelievers maintain it is the sea-birds' crying, which resembles now a bleat, and now a human wail; but belated fishermen swear that they have met, wandering on the sands, between two tides, about the little city cast out so far from the rest of the world, an old shepherd whose head, shrouded in a cloak, is always invisible, and who leads behind him a he-goat with the face of a man, and a she-goat with the face of a woman. They have long white hair, and they talk incessantly, quarrelling together in an unknown tongue; then suddenly they cease crying and begin to bleat with all their might.

I said to the monk: "Do you believe it?"

He murmured: "I do not know."

I continued: "If there really existed on the earth any other beings beside ourselves, how is it possible that we should not have known them long ago? How should you have seen them, you? How should I not have seen them, I?"

He answered: "Do we see the hundred-thousandth part of what exists? For instance, take the wind, which is the greatest

force in nature, which knocks down men, lays low buildings, tears up trees by the roots, heaps the sea into mountains of water, destroys coasts, and hurls great ships upon the breakers,—the Wind which kills, which whistles, which moans, which roars,—have you ever seen it? Can you see it? It exists, nevertheless."

I was silent before this simple reasoning. This man was a wise man or perhaps a fool. I could not have decided which; but I was silent. What he had just said I had often thought.

July 3d.

I have slept badly; there is certainly something feverish in the air here, for my coachman suffers from the same complaint as myself. On my return yesterday I noticed that he was looking curiously pale. I asked him:—

"What is the matter, Jean?"

"It is that I cannot sleep, Monsieur; my nights eat up my days. Since Monsieur went away, it holds me like a charm."

The other servants, however, are well; but I myself am in great fear of a relapse.

July 4th.

Yes, I have had a relapse. My old nightmares have returned. Last night I felt some one squatting on my chest with his mouth to mine, drinking my life out through my lips. Yes, like a leech he drew it out of my throat. Then when he was satiated he arose, and I, I awoke, so nearly murdered, so exhausted, so broken, that I had no longer power to move. If this continues many days more I shall certainly go away again.

July 5th.

Have I lost my reason? That which has happened, that which I saw last night, is so strange that my head turns when I think of it!

I had, as I now do every evening, locked my door; then, being thirsty, I drank half a glass of water, and I noticed by mere chance that the water-bottle was full up to the glass stopper.

After that I went to bed and fell into one of my dreadful slumbers, from which, two hours later, I was drawn by a shock more awful yet.

Imagine a man who sleeps, who is being murdered, and who awakes with a knife in his breast, and who groans covered with blood, and who cannot breathe, and who is dying, and who does not understand. It was like that!

Having at last recovered my reason, I again felt thirsty; I lit a candle and I went to the table where the water-bottle stood. I raised it, tipping it over the glass; nothing came out. It was empty! It was completely empty! At first I did not understand; then, all at once, I experienced so terrible an emotion that I had to sit down, or rather that I simply fell, upon a chair! Then, with a start, I jumped to my feet, and looked about me! Then, again, I sat down, dazed with astonishment and with fear, before the transparent glass! I glared at it with staring eyes, trying to understand. My hands trembled! Had some one really drunk that water? Who—I? I, without a doubt. It could only be I. Then I was a somnambulist, I was living, without knowing it, that mysterious double life which makes us wonder whether we are in ourselves two beings,

or whether some strange being, unknowable and invisible, may not animate, at moments when our will is weak, our bodies captive and more obedient to this stranger than to us.

Ah! who will understand my abominable anguish? Who will understand the emotion of a man, perfectly sane, well educated, full of reason, and yet contemplating in terror, through the glass of a water-bottle, the disappearance, while he slept, of a little water! And I remained there until morning, not daring to go back to bed.

July 6th.

I am going mad. The water was again drunk by some one last night; or, rather, I drank it!

But, is it — is it I? Who should it be? Who? Oh, my God! I am going mad. Who shall save me?

July 10th.

I have just established the most wonder-arousing proofs.

Yes, I am mad! And yet?

On the 6th of July, before going to bed, I placed some wine, some milk, some water,

some bread, and some strawberries on my table.

Some one drank—I drank—all the water, and a little milk. The wine, the bread, and the strawberries were not touched.

On the 7th of July I made the same experiment, with the same result.

On the 8th of July I suppressed the water and the milk. Nothing was touched at all.

Finally, on the 9th of July, I put only the milk and the water on my table, being careful to wrap up the bottles in cloths of white muslin and to tie down the stoppers. Then I rubbed my lips, my beard, my hands, with black-lead, and I retired.

The invincible slumber seized me, soon followed by the dreadful awaking. I had not stirred; my very sheets bore no stains. I rushed to the table. The cloths covering the bottles were immaculate. I untied the cords, trembling with fear. Some one had drunk all the water! Some one had drunk all the milk! Oh, my God!...

I leave to-day for Paris.

July 12th.

Paris. I must have lost my head com-

pletely these last days. I have been undoubtedly the plaything of a nervous imagination, unless, that is, I am really a somnambulist, or that I have been subjected to one of those influences, admitted but not yet explained, which are called "suggestions." In any case my perturbation came near insanity, and twenty-four hours of Paris have sufficed to put me on my feet again.

Yesterday, after taking a drive and making some visits which caused a new, revivifying air to pass into my soul, I finished the evening at the Théâtre Français. They were playing a piece by Alexandre Dumas *fils;* and that strong, alert spirit completed my cure. Solitude is certainly dangerous for an active intelligence. We need around us men who think and talk. When we are long alone, we people the void with phantoms.

I returned to the hotel in great good spirits, along the boulevards. Reminded by the jostling of the crowd, I thought, not without irony, of my terrors and imaginings of last week, when I believed, yes, really believed, that an invisible being was dwelling under my roof. How easily we lose our heads,

how weakly and quickly we become wild with fear the moment we encounter some little incident which cannot be explained!

Instead of concluding with the words: "The reason I do not understand is that the cause as yet escapes me," we immediately proceed to imagine some dreadful mystery, some supernatural power.

July 14th.

Fête de la République. I took a walk in the streets. The flags and the fireworks amused me like a child. Nevertheless, it is simply an absurdity—this being joyous on a fixed date, by Government decree. The people is an imbecile herd, now stupidly patient, now ferociously rebellious. Some one says to it: "Make merry." It makes merry. Some one says to it: "Go and fight with your neighbors." It goes and fights. Some one says to it: "Vote for the Emperor." It votes for the Emperor. Then some one says to it: "Vote for the Republic." And it votes for the Republic.

Those who give it these orders are fools, also; but instead of obeying men, they obey

principles, things whose stupidity, whose barrenness, whose falsity appears in the very name—Principles! Ideas supposed certain and immutable in this world where one is sure of nothing, where even light, even sound are illusions, merely states in the brain, merely states in the brain!

July 16th.

Yesterday I saw something which disturbed me very much.

I was dining with my cousin Mme. Sablé, whose husband commands the 76th Chasseurs at Limoges. At dinner there were two young ladies, and the husband of one of them, a Doctor Parent, a nerve-specialist, much interested in the extraordinary developments brought to light by the experiments now making in Hypnotism and Suggestion.

He gave us a long account of the prodigious results obtained by English scientists and by the physicians of the school at Nancy.

The facts which he advanced appeared to me so extremely fantastic that I declared myself entirely sceptical.

"We are," he maintained, "on the point of discovering one of Nature's most impor-

tant secrets—I mean to say, one of her most important terrestrial secrets; since, of course, she hides forever others quite as important up there in the stars. Ever since Man has been able to think, ever since he has been able to speak and write his thoughts, he has from time to time felt brushing against him the touch of a mystery which is impenetrable to his gross, imperfect senses; and he has tried to supplement this weakness of his bodily organs by an effort of his mind. While his intelligence remained in the rudimentary state this notion of phenomena, all about him, yet invisible, took on shapes of the most vulgar terror. From it were born popular beliefs in the supernatural, legends of wandering spirits, of fairies, of gnomes, of ghosts — I might even add, the vulgar idea of God; for the ordinary conception of a workman-creator, in whatever religion it springs up, is, of all the inventions of the human brain, the most common, the most stupid, the most unacceptable. Nothing is truer than Voltaire's epigram: 'God made man in his own image, and man has returned the compliment.'

"But about a century ago people began to have dim forebodings of something new. Mesmer and several others started us on an unexpected track, and now, and especially in the last three or four years, we have arrived at wonderful results."

My cousin, as unbelieving as myself, smiled. Doctor Parent said to her: "May I try to hypnotize you, madame?"

"Certainly you may."

She seated herself in an arm-chair, and, trying to fascinate her gaze, he looked at her fixedly. As for me, I felt suddenly troubled—my heart beating, a choking in my throat. I saw the eyes of Mme. Sablé droop, her mouth work, her breast heave. At the end of ten minutes she slept.

"Put yourself behind her," said the physician.

And I seated myself behind her. In her hands he placed a visiting-card, saying: "This is a mirror; what do you see in it?"

She answered: "I see my cousin."

"What is he doing?"

"He is twisting his mustache."

"What now?"

"He is taking a photograph out of his pocket."

"A photograph of whom?"

"Of himself."

It was true! And the photograph had been sent home only that evening to my hotel.

"How does he look in the photograph?"

"He is standing up, with his hat in his hand."

So then she saw in this card, in this white card, as well as she would have seen in a glass!

The young ladies, very much frightened, cried: "Enough! Enough! Enough!"

But the doctor gave her an order: "You will rise at eight o'clock to-morrow morning; and you will go to find your cousin at his hotel; and you will beg him to lend you five thousand francs, which your husband has said he needs, and hopes to get from you when he comes up shortly to town."

Then he awoke her.

While returning to the hotel I meditated on this curious *séance*, and I was assailed by doubts, not of the absolute, the indubita-

ble good faith of my cousin, whom I have known like a sister from childhood up, but of a possible trick on the part of the doctor. Might he not, at the same time with his visiting-card, have held before the sleeping lady a mirror hidden in his hand? Professional prestidigitators perform equally extraordinary feats.

So I went home and to bed.

But this morning, about half after eight, I was awaked by my man, who said:

"It is Mme. Sablé. She asks to speak with you, sir, immediately."

I dressed in all haste, and I bid him show her in.

Very much embarrassed, she sat down, lowering her eyes, not lifting her veil; and she said:

"My dear cousin, I have to ask you for a great favor."

"What is it, cousin?"

"I hate to ask you, and yet I must. I need—I need five thousand francs; I need it very much."

"Oh, come now!—You?"

"Yes, I. Or, rather, my husband. He

says I must get the money for him somehow."

I was so stupefied that I stammered. I asked myself if this were not a joke on me which she was playing with Doctor Parent; if this were not a simple farce rehearsed in advance, and very well acted.

But, when I looked at her carefully, all my doubts vanished. She trembled with anguish, the proceeding was so painful for her; and I saw that her throat was full of sobs.

I knew she was very rich, and I continued:

"What! Your husband has not five thousand francs at his disposal? Come! Think a little. Are you sure he told you to ask me for it?"

For some seconds she hesitated as though making a great effort to remember, then she answered:

"Yes. . . . Yes. . . . I am sure of it."

"Has he written?"

Again she hesitated, reflecting. I divined how she was tortured by the working of her thoughts. She did not know. She knew simply that she must borrow from me, for

her husband, five thousand francs. But she gained the courage to lie.

"Yes, he wrote to me."

"When, then? You said nothing to me of it yesterday."

"I got the letter this morning."

"Can you show it me?"

"No . . . no . . . no . . . it had private matters in it . . . too personal . . . I . . . I burnt it."

"Oh! I suppose then he's been getting into debt."

Again she hesitated; then murmured:

"I do not know."

I announced, abruptly:

"The fact is at the moment I haven't five thousand francs to my hand, cousin."

She uttered a kind of suffering cry.

"Oh, oh! I beg you, I beg you to get it somehow, somehow." . . .

She grew excited, clasped her hands before me as though she were praying! I heard her voice change tone; she wept and stammered; she was tormented, overpowered, dominated by the irresistible order which had been laid upon her.

"Oh, oh! I beg you . . . if you knew how I suffer. . . . I must have it to-day."

I took pity on her.

"You shall have it, and very soon, I promise."

"Oh, thank you! thank you! You are good."

I continued:—"Do you remember what happened at your house last night?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember that Doctor Parent put you to sleep?"

"Yes."

"Well, he ordered you to come to me this morning, and borrow five thousand francs. And at this moment you are obeying his suggestion."

She reflected for a few seconds, and answered:

"But it's my husband who wants it."

For an hour I tried in vain to convince her.

As soon as she had gone, I hurried to the Doctor. He was on the point of going out; and he listened to me with a smile. Then he said:—

"Do you believe now?"

"Yes, I must."

"Let us go to your cousin."

She was already dozing in a long chair, exhausted with fatigue. The physician felt her pulse, looked at her for a time, his raised hand pointing towards her eyes. Little by little she closed them, submitting to the resistless strength of the magnetic power.

When she slumbered:

"Your husband has no longer any need of five thousand francs. You will therefore forget that you have asked your cousin to lend you them; and if he speaks to you of it, you will not understand him."

Then he awoke her. I drew out a pocket-book.

"Here, my dear cousin, here is what you asked me for this morning."

She was so surprised that I did not dare to insist. Nevertheless, I tried to arouse her memory; but she denied everything with vehemence, thought I was making fun of her, and at last came near being angry.

. . . . . .

There it is!—I have just returned; and I was so disturbed by this experience that at luncheon I could eat nothing.

July 19th.

Several people to whom I have related this adventure have made fun of me. I do not know what to think. The wise man says: "It may be."

July 21st.

I've been to dine at Bougival; afterwards I went to the Watermen's Ball. Decidedly everything depends on circumstance and place. To believe in the supernatural on the island of La Grenouillière would be the height of folly indeed. . . . But on the top of Mont St. Michel? . . . But in the Far East? We are subject fearsomely to the influence of what surrounds us. Next week I shall go home.

July 30th.

I arrived yesterday. All well.

August 2d.

Nothing new. Beautiful weather. I pass my days watching the Seine flow.

August 4th.

Quarrels among the servants. They say that some one breaks the glass at night in the closets. My man accuses the cook, who accuses the laundress, who accuses the two maids. Which one is guilty? It would take a wise man to say.

August 6th.

This time I am not mad. I have seen. . . . I have seen! . . . I have seen! . . . I can doubt no more. . . . I have seen! . . . I am still chilled to my very finger-nails. . . . I am still afraid to the very marrow. . . . I have seen! . . .

I was taking a walk about two o'clock, in broad daylight, in my rose-garden, . . . along a row of autumn roses which are already beginning to bloom.

Pausing to look at a Géant des Batailles, which bore three magnificent buds, I saw, I distinctly saw, quite near me the stem of one of these roses bend as though twisted by an invisible hand, then break, as though that hand had plucked it! Then the flower lifted itself, following the curve which would have been described by an arm carrying it

to a mouth; and it remained hanging in the empty air, alone, motionless, a terrifying red stain three paces from my eyes.

Maddened, I threw myself forward to seize it! I found nothing; it had disappeared. Then I was overcome with violent anger against myself, since a man who is serious and reasonable should not allow himself to have such hallucinations as this.

But was it really an hallucination? I turned to look for the stem, and I discovered it almost immediately, on the plant, freshly broken, between the two other roses which remained upon the tree.

So I went back to the house with a troubled soul; for now I am certain that near me there exists an invisible being who lives on milk and on water; who can touch objects; can take them up and change their places; whose nature, therefore, though imperceptible to our sense, is material, and who, like myself, dwells under my roof....

August 7th.

I slept quietly. He drank all the water in my bottle, but did not disturb my sleep.

I ask myself if I am mad. While walking just now along the river, doubts about my reason came to me; not vague doubts such as I have hitherto experienced, but doubts precise and absolute. I have seen lunatics, I have known some who remained intelligent, clear-headed, lucid on every subject save one. They talked clearly, easily, profoundly, then suddenly their intelligence, striking on the rock of their monomania, there ground itself to pieces, was broken up and foundered in that terrible, furious sea, full of heaving waves and mists and squalls, the sea which we call "Madness."

I should certainly believe that I was mad, quite mad, if I were not so entirely self-conscious, if I did not recognize my condition so perfectly, if I were not always sounding it by an analysis which is so completely clear. I am, then, only a man who suffers from an hallucination, but who is in full possession of his reason? Some trouble has occurred in my brain, one of those troubles which psychologists nowadays endeavor to note and particularize? And this trouble has induced a profound lapse in my intellect,

in the order and logic of my thoughts? A similar phenomenon occurs in dreams, where we are led through the most improbable of phantasmagoria without feeling a shadow of surprise, simply for the reason that the verifying apparatus, our sense of control, is asleep, while our imaginative faculty wakes and is active. May it not be, therefore, that one of the invisible keys of my cerebral piano is paralyzed? People very often, in consequence of an accident, lose their memory of proper names, or of verbs, or of figures, or simply of dates. That the various little bundles of thought are specially localized is now considered proved. Hence what is there surprising if my power of controlling the unreality of certain hallucinations finds itself at the present moment torpid?

I pondered on all this as I followed the bank of the river. The sun covered the stream with radiance, made the earth delicious, filled my eyes with love for life, for the swallows whose swift motions are a joy to look at, for the grasses by the water's edge whose rustling is a joy to me when I listen.

Little by little, however, I was penetrated

by a strange uneasiness. It seemed to me that a force, an occult force, benumbed me, checked me, prevented me from going farther, called me back. I experienced a mournful feeling that I must return, a feeling like that which oppresses us when, having left at home some sick person whom we love, we are suddenly seized by a presentiment that she is worse.

So I turned back, against my will, certain that I should find bad news at home, a letter, or a telegram. There was nothing, and I remained more surprised and uneasy than if I had again seen some fantastic vision.

August 8th.

I passed a dreadful evening yesterday. He no longer makes his presence evident, but I feel him near me, spying, watching, penetrating me, dominating me, more terrible while thus concealed than if he manifested by supernatural phenomena his invisible and constant presence.

I slept, however.

August 9th.

Nothing. But I am afraid.

August 10th.

Nothing. What will happen to-morrow?

August 11th.

Still nothing; I cannot stay at home any longer with this fear and these thoughts in my soul; I shall go away.

August 12th: 10 P.M.

All day I have wanted to be off; I could not go. I wished to perform an act of free-will, very easy and very simple:—going out of my door—getting into my carriage—driving to Rouen. I was not able. Why?

August 13th.

When one is attacked by certain maladies all the powers of the physical being seem broken, all the energies destroyed, all the muscles relaxed, the bones becoming soft as flesh and the flesh liquid as water. I experience this in my moral state after a strange and appalling fashion. I have no longer any strength, courage, self-control, no power to put in motion my own will. I can no longer will; but some one wills for me, and I obey.

August 14th.

I am lost! Some one is in possession of my soul and governs it. Some one orders all my acts, all my movements, all my thoughts. I am no longer anything in myself; I am nothing but an enslaved and terrified spectator of the things which I accomplish. I desire to go out; I cannot—he does not wish it, and I remain, frightened, trembling, in the arm-chair where he holds me seated. I desire simply to rise, to get up, so as to prove that I am still my own master. I cannot! I am riveted to my seat, and my seat adheres to the ground with such force that no power could lift us up.

Then, on a sudden, I must, I must, I must go to the end of the garden and pick some strawberries and eat them. And I go. I pick the berries and I eat them. Oh, my God!—my God! If there be a God, deliver me, save me, help me! Pardon! Pity! Grace! Save me! Oh, what suffering! what torture! what horror!

August 15th.

Yes, this is the way in which my poor

cousin was possessed and dominated when she came to me to borrow five thousand francs. She submitted to a strange will which had entered into her like a new soul —like a new parasite and dominant soul. Is the world ending?

But this being who governs me—what is he, this invisible? Who is he, this unknowable, this prowler of a supernatural race?

And so the Invisibles exist! How is it, then, that since the beginning of the world they have never manifested themselves as they have to me? I never read of any such things as have happened here in my house. Oh, if I could leave it!—if I could go away —flee and never return—I should be saved! But I cannot.

August 16th.

I was able to make my escape to-day for two hours, like a prisoner who finds the door of his dungeon, by chance, open. I suddenly felt that I was free, and that he was far away. I ordered the carriage instantly, and I got as far as Rouen. Oh, what joy to say to a man who obeys you— "Go to Rouen."

I had myself driven to the library, and I took out Hermann Herestauss's great treatise, *The Unrecognized Inhabitants of the Ancient and Modern World.*

Then, as I was getting back into my brougham I wanted to say: "To the station!" but cried—I did not say, I shouted—with a voice so loud that the people in the street turned round—"Home!" and I fell, mad with despair, on the cushions of the carriage. He had found and captured me again.

August 17th.

Ah! what a night!—what a night! And yet it occurs to me that I ought to rejoice. I read till one o'clock in the morning. Hermann Herestauss is a doctor of philosophy and of theogony; he has written a complete history of the manifestations of those beings which wander mostly invisible about mankind, or are imagined by him as so doing; he treats exhaustively of their origin, of their domain, of the power which they exercise; and not one of them resembles the one who haunts me. One would say that ever since man could think he has had dim forebod-

ings and fears of a new being, stronger than himself, his successor in the world; and that, feeling him near at hand, and being unable to foresee the real nature of this new master, he has in terror created all that fantastic crowd of occult beings—vague phantoms born of fear.

But to continue. Having read till one o'clock, I went and seated myself at an open window to refresh brow and brain in the calm air of darkness.

The night was gentle and warm. How I should have loved this kind of a night long ago!

No moon. The stars at the back of the black sky glittered and trembled. Who dwell in those worlds up there? What forms? what living things? what animals? what plants? That which thinks in those distant universes, what knows it more than we? What power has it more than we? What sees it that we know not? And some day or another will not one of those beings, traversing space, appear upon the earth and conquer it, just as the Normans of old crossed the sea to subdue more feeble races?

We are so weak, so defenceless, so ignorant, so little, we here on this revolving speck of mud and water.

Thus dozing in the fresh evening breeze, I drowsed off.

But after I had slept about forty minutes, I opened my eyes, making no other movement, awoke by some confused fantastical emotion. At first I saw nothing; then, on a sudden, it seemed to me that a page of the open book lying on my table had just turned by itself. No breath of air came through the window. I was surprised, and I waited. At the end of about four minutes I saw, I saw, yes, I saw with my eyes another page lift itself and fold over down on the preceding one as though a finger had turned it. My arm-chair was empty, seemed empty; but I understood that he was there, he, seated in my place, and that he was reading. With one furious leap, with the bound of a beast who has rebelled at last, and fallen on his master to tear him open, I crossed the room to seize, to grip him in my hands, to kill him! . . . But my chair, before I had reached it, was overturned, as though some

one fled before me . . . my table tottered, my lamp fell and was extinguished, and my window shut itself as though a detected thief had leaped out into the night by catching both the sashes in his hands.

So, he fled! He was afraid, he was afraid of me!

Then . . . then . . . to-morrow . . . or the day after . . . or some day . . . I shall be able to get him down under my hands, and to crush him against the earth! Do not dogs sometimes bite and throttle their masters?

August 18th.

I have reflected all day. Oh yes, I shall obey him, follow his suggestions, accomplish all his desires, appear humble, submissive, cowardly! He is the strongest. But an hour will come. . . .

August 19th.

I know . . . I know . . . I know all! I have read as follows in the *Revue du Monde Scientifique:* "Information of a curious nature comes to us from Rio de Janeiro. An epidemic of madness, comparable to those contagious crazes which attacked the Euro-

pean peoples during the Middle Ages, is, it seems, at present, raging in the province of San Paulo. The inhabitants are leaving their houses in dismay, deserting their villages, and abandoning their crops, maintaining that they are being pursued, taken possession of, governed like a human herd of cattle, by certain invisible but tangible beings, resembling vampires, who suck upon their life-blood during their sleep, and who, besides that, take water and milk, but no other nourishment.

"Professor Don Pedro Henriquez, accompanied by several other scientists of the medical profession, is on his way to the province of San Paulo, to study on the spot the causes and the manifestations of this curious mania; he will then propose to the Emperor whatever measures he decides best for recalling these unhappy lunatics to their reason."

Ah! Ah! I remember, I remember the beautiful Brazilian three-master which passed up the Seine under my windows on the 8th of last May! I thought it so beautiful, so white, so gay! The Being was

aboard it, coming from that distant country where his race was born! And he saw me! He saw that my dwelling was white, likewise; and he leaped from the ship to the river-banks. Oh, my God!

And now, I know, I divine. The kingdom of man is ended.

He has come. He whom primitive peoples dreaded with a naïve terror, He who was exorcised by anxious priests, He whom sorcerers invoked in vain on sombre nights, He to whom the forebodings of man, the transitory master of the earth, have given the monstrous or gracious forms of gnomes and ghosts, of genii, of fairies, and of familiar spirits. After the vulgar conceptions of primitive fear came the clearer presentations of more highly developed minds. Mesmer first divined Him; and the doctors, as long as ten years ago, discovered the exact nature of His power before He himself had ever used it. They have played with this weapon of the new Lord, this domination of a mysterious will over a human soul made captive. They have called it magnetism, hypnotism, suggestion . . . what not? I have

seen them, like careless children, amusing themselves with that dreadful power! Woe to us! Woe to Man! He is come, the . . . the . . . how calls he himself . . . the . . . it seems to me that he is crying out his name, and that I cannot hear it . . . the . . . yes . . . he is crying it . . . I am listening . . . I cannot . . . I repeat . . . the . . . Horla . . . I heard . . . the Horla . . . it is he . . . the Horla . . . he has come! . . .

Ah! the vulture has devoured the dove, and the wolf has devoured the sheep, the lion has devoured the buffalo with the pointed horns; and the man has slain the lion by arrows and by his knife and by powder. But the Horla will make of man what man has made of the horse, and of the ox: his thing, his servant, his food, by the sole power of his will. Woe unto us!

Nevertheless, the animal sometimes revolts and kills his master . . . and I, too, I wish . . . I shall be able . . . but I must first know what he is like, I must touch him, see him! Scientists say that the eyes of animals are different from ours, and do not distinguish things as ours do. . . . Just so my eyes can-

not distinguish this new-comer who oppresses me.

Why? Oh! now I remember the words of the monk of Mont St. Michel: "Do we see the hundred-thousandth part of what exists? For instance, take the wind, which is the greatest force in nature, which knocks down men, lays low buildings, tears up trees by the roots, heaps the sea into mountains of water, destroys coasts, and hurls great ships upon the breakers,—the Wind which kills, which whistles, which moans, which roars,—have you ever seen it? Can you see it? It exists, nevertheless."

And I continued to reflect: "My eye is so feeble, so imperfect, that it does not even distinguish solid bodies, if they are transparent—such as glass!... And if a mirror without a quicksilver back bars the way, my eye allows me to throw myself up against it like a bird which, straying into a room, dashes its head to pieces against the window-panes. A thousand things beside deceive and confuse it. Then what wonder if it cannot see this new transparent body?"

A new being! Why not? Inevitably he

must have arisen! Why should we be the last? We cannot see him as we do other beings created before ourselves? That is simply because his nature is more perfect, because his body is more subtilely and highly developed than ours, than ours so feeble, than ours conceived so roughly, encumbered with organs like over-complex springs, always fatigued, and always straining. For our body lives like a plant and like a beast, gaining a painful sustenance from air, from grasses, and from flesh. A living machine, the prey to sickness, to deformity, and to decay, it is of dust; a work at once coarse and delicate, irregular, pitifully simple, fantastic, and ill-made ingeniously; the first rough sketch of a being which might sometime be developed into something intelligent and perfect.

There are, after all, from the oyster up to the man, so few of us here on the earth. Why not one more, once the period which separates the appearances of different successive species has been accomplished?

Why not one more? Why not other trees with immense flowers dazzling and suffusing

entire regions with their perfume? Why not other elements besides Fire, Air, Earth, and Water? They are four, only four, these nursing fathers of being! What a pity! Why are they not forty, four hundred, four thousand? How poor, how mean, how wretched is everything! Granted, but not freely; conceived, but without genius; executed, but with no lightness of touch! The elephant, forsooth, the hippopotamus, how graceful! The camel, how elegant!

But what say you of the butterfly, that flying flower? I dream of one large as a hundred worlds, with wings whose shape, whose beauty, whose color, and whose manner of motion I cannot even describe. But I see it . . . it is going from star to star refreshing and perfuming each with the light and harmonious breathing of its course! . . . And whole peoples, high up there, watch, in ecstasy and ravishment, its passing! . . .

. . . . . .

What is the matter with me? It is he, he, the Horla, who haunts me and makes

me dream such follies! He is within me. He has become my soul; I shall kill him!

August 20th.

I shall kill him. I have seen him. I sat down last night at my table, and I pretended to be absorbed in writing. I knew very well that he would come and prowl round me, very near, so near that perhaps I should be able to touch him, to seize him. And then! . . . then I should have the strength of desperation; I should have hands and knees, breast, and brow, and teeth, to strangle, to crush, to bite, to tear.

And, straining every sense, I watched for him.

I had lit my two lamps and the eight candles on my mantel, exactly as though the light would help me to discover him!

Before me was my bed, an old oak bedstead with columns. On my right the chimney-piece. On my left the door, which I had carefully shut, after leaving it open for a while in order to attract him. Behind me, a tall wardrobe, with a looking-glass which I used every day for shaving and for dress-

ing, and in which, every time I passed it, I had a habit of looking myself over from head to foot.

So I pretended to write in order to deceive him; for he, too, was watching. And suddenly I felt, I was certain, that he was reading over my shoulder, that he was there almost brushing my ear.

I jumped up with out-stretched hands, and turned round so quickly that I almost fell. Well? In my chamber it was as light as day, but I did not see myself in the glass! . . . It was empty, clear, deep, full of light! My image was not in it . . . and I stood there right in front of it, I! The great glass was clear from top to bottom. And with wild eyes I stared at this thing; and I did not dare to advance, I did not dare to move, feeling indeed that he was there, but that he would escape me, he, whose invisible body had absorbed the reflection of mine.

What fear I suffered! Then, all of a sudden, I began to perceive myself in a mist at the back of the mirror, in a mist as though through a sheet of water; and it seemed to me that this water glided from left to right,

slowly, making my figure clearer, from second to second. It was like the ending of an eclipse. That which concealed me did not appear to possess sharp outlines, but merely a kind of opaque transparence, rarefying itself little by little.

At last I could distinguish my whole figure, just as I do each day when I look.

I had seen him! The terror of it remains still on me, causing me still to shiver.

August 21st.

Kill him? How? Since I cannot reach him? Poison? But he would see me mixing it in the water; and, besides, would our poisons have any effect on his supersensual body? No . . . no . . . of course not. . . . What then? . . . what then? . . .

August 22d.

I have had up a locksmith from Rouen, and I have ordered for my room some iron shutters like those which certain private houses in Paris have on the ground-floor as a protection against robbers. He is also to make me an iron door. I am ap-

pearing like a great coward, but at that I laugh! . . .

. . . . . .

Sept. 10th.

Rouen. Hôtel Continental. It is accomplished . . . it is accomplished . . . but is he dead? My soul is overwhelmed by what I have seen.

Yesterday the locksmith, having fitted my shutters and my iron door, I left everything open until midnight, although it began to be very cold.

All of a sudden I felt that he was there, and a joy, a mad joy seized me. I rose gently, and I walked up and down for a long time in order to put him off his guard. Then I carelessly took off my boots and put on my slippers. Then I closed my iron shutters, and, returning tranquilly to the door, I closed that also and double-locked it. Again returning to the window, I secured the shutter with a padlock, and put the key in my pocket.

All of a sudden I understood that he was stirring anxiously round me; that, in his

turn now, he was afraid; that he was commanding me to open. I came near yielding; I did not yield, but, setting my back against the door, I opened it on a crack just wide enough for me to pass through backward; and as I am very tall, my head touched the lintel. I was sure that he could not have escaped, and I shut him in all alone—all alone! What happiness! I had him fast! Then I went down-stairs, running. In the drawing-room under my bedchamber I took the two lamps, and I poured oil over the carpet, over the furniture, over everything; then I set fire to it and I escaped from the house after having double-locked on the outside the great hall door.

And I hid myself at the bottom of the garden in a thicket of laurels. How long it was! How long it was! All remained black, silent, immobile; not a breath of air, not a star in the great mountains of clouds which I could not see, but which rested on my soul so heavily, so heavily.

I watched my house and I waited. How long it was! I had begun to think that the fire had gone out of itself, or that he—He

had extinguished it. Then one of the windows on the ground-floor cracked under the pressure of the inner conflagration, and a tongue of flame—a great tongue of red and yellow flame—long and soft and caressing, climbed up along the white wall and kissed the very roof. A glow ran over the trees, the branches, the leaves, and a shiver—a shiver of fear also! The birds awoke; a dog began to howl; it seemed to me that the day itself was getting up! Soon two other windows burst open, and I saw that the whole ground-floor of my house was nothing but a dreadful brazier. But a cry —an awful cry—sharp, heart-rending—a woman's shriek—came out into the night, and two windows in the garret opened! I had forgotten my servants! I saw their wild faces, their waving arms! . . .

Then, mad with horror, I set off running to the village, shouting "Help! — help! Fire!—fire!" I met people already hastening to the scene, and I returned with them —to look!

The house was now simply a horrible and magnificent stake—a monstrous stake—illu-

minating all the country—a stake at which men were burning, and at which he burned also—He, He, my prisoner, the new Being, the new master, the Horla!

Suddenly the entire roof fell in between the walls, and a volcano of flame shot upward to the sky. Through the windows open upon the furnace I saw the fiery vat, and I thought: he is there in that burning oven—dead. . . .

Dead? Perhaps. . . . But his body? His body, which the light of day could pass through, is it not perhaps indestructible by such means as destroy our bodies?

What if he be not dead? . . . Time alone, perhaps, has power over the Being Invisible, the Being Terrible. Why a transparent body? why an imperceptible body? why the body of a Spirit, if he too must fear misfortunes, wounds, infirmities, premature destruction?

Premature destruction? All human terror springs from the idea of that. After Man, the Horla. After him who can die any day, any hour, any moment, by any accident, has come He who shall die only on his

appointed day, at his appointed hour, at his appointed minute, having touched the appointed limit of existence!

No . . . no . . . there is no doubt, there is no doubt. . . . I have not killed him. . . . Then . . . then . . . I see . . . it is plain . . . yes, it is plain that I must . . . kill . . . myself! . . .

. . . . . .

SIESTA.

BY

ALEXANDER L. KIELLAND.

SIESTA.

In one of those elegant bachelors' lodgings in Rue Castiglione a merry company lingered over the dessert.

Señor José Francisco de Silvis was a Portuguese, short in stature, black as a coal. He was one of those Brazilians who are wont to cross the ocean with incredible fortunes, to lead incredible lives in Paris, and to distinguish themselves, above all things, by making the most incredible acquaintances.

At this little dinner-party there was hardly one who was acquainted with his neighbor on the right, or on the left; excepting, of course, those coming together. The host himself had met them either at a ball, or at table-d'hôte, or in the street.

Señor de Silvis laughed loudly, talked loudly, wherever he went, as rich foreigners always do. Not being able to gain *entrée* into the Jockey Club, he collected around himself whatsoever he happened upon. He immediately asked for the address. The next day he sent an invitation for a small dinner-party.

He spoke all languages—indeed, even German. One could see that he was not a little proud when he called across the table, "*Mein lieber Herr Doktor!—wie geht's Ihnen?*"

And there was, too, a real bodily German doctor in the party, with an exuberant beard, as red as fire, and that smile of Sedan, worn by all Germans in Paris.

The temperature of the entertainment rose with the champagne. Fluent French and murdered French alternated with Spanish and Portuguese. The ladies leaned back in their chairs and laughed. The party was soon sufficiently acquainted to cast aside all embarrassment. Jesting and witty words flew over the table from mouth to mouth. The "lieber Doktor" alone discussed seri-

ously with his neighbor—a French journalist, with a red ribbon in his button-hole.

And there was still another present who did not allow himself to be carried away with the general gayety. He sat at the right of Mademoiselle Adele. On her left sat her new admirer, the corpulent Anatole, who had been eating excessively of the truffles.

During the meal Mademoiselle Adele had attempted, by many harmless little devices, to enliven her neighbor on the right. But he remained quiet, answered courteously, but shortly and in a low voice.

She thought at first that he was a Pole; one of those most wearisome of creatures, who travel about and play the despised. But she soon discovered that she had erred. That annoyed Mademoiselle Adele.

It was one of her many accomplishments to be able to distinguish, at the first glance, the many foreigners whom she encountered. And she was wont to declare that she could guess the nationality of a man as soon as he had exchanged ten words with her.

But this taciturn stranger was the source

of much perplexity to her. If he had only been blond! Then she would at once have made him an Englishman, for he spoke like one. But he had black hair, a heavy dark mustache, and a fine petit figure. His fingers were remarkably long, and he had a peculiar way of crumbling the bread and playing with the dessert-fork.

"He is a musician," whispered Mademoiselle Adele to her corpulent friend.

"Ah," replied Monsieur Anatole, "I fear that I have eaten too many truffles."

Mademoiselle Adele again whispered some good advice into his ear, whereupon he laughed and appeared smitten with love.

Meanwhile, however, she could not neglect the interesting stranger. After she had enticed him to drink several glasses of champagne, he became livelier and more talkative.

"Oh," she suddenly cried out, "I perceive by your speech that you are certainly an Englishman!"

The stranger blushed and hastily replied, "No, madam!"

Mademoiselle Adele laughed.

"Pardon me," she said; "I know, Amer-

icans are always vexed when one takes them for English."

"I am not an American either," returned the stranger.

This was too much for Mademoiselle Adele. She bent over her plate and seemed very much embarrassed. Then, indeed, she observed that Mademoiselle Louison, sitting opposite to her, was delighted with her blunder.

The strange gentleman understood this, and added, half aloud: "I am an Irishman, madam."

"Ah," uttered Mademoiselle Adele, with a grateful smile, for she was easily reconciled.

"Anatole — Irishman! What is that?" she whispered.

"They are the poor in England," he whispered in reply.

"So!—hem!" Mademoiselle Adele raised her eyebrows and cast a sly glance at her neighbor on the right. With one stroke he had completely swept away her interest in him.

De Silvis's dinner was excellent. They had been long sitting at the table. When

Monsieur Anatole remembered the oysters, which had introduced the menu, they were to him like a pleasant dream. The truffles, on the contrary, continued to be to him a lasting reality.

The dinner proper was ended. Now and then some one lifted his glass again, or culled from the dish one of the choice fruits or little bon-bons.

Tender-hearted, blond Mademoiselle Louison was lost in deep reverie over a grape which she had dropped into her champagne glass.

"Look," cried Mademoiselle Louison, turning her great, liquid eyes towards the journalist; "see how the white angels bear a sinner towards heaven!"

"Ah, charming! mademoiselle. What a sublime idea!" cried the enraptured journalist in return.

Mademoiselle Louison's sublime idea made the circuit of the table, and was generally applauded. The frivolous Adele alone whispered to her corpulent admirer: "Really, 'twould take a whole host of angels to carry you to heaven, Anatole!"

The journalist, in the interim, knew how to grasp the opportunity and arrest the general attention of the company. Furthermore, he was happy at the prospect of escaping a wearisome political discussion with the German. And since he wore the red ribbon in his button-hole, and, in addition, had the matchless, important tone of a journalist, the entire party gave him audience.

He explained how small forces, when combined in operation, can bear such great burdens. And then he passed to the topic of the day: The magnificent collections of the press for sufferers from the floods in Spain and for the destitute in Paris.

He had much to relate. Every moment he spoke of the press as "we," while in the heat of his eloquence he talked of "these millions which we have raised with such enormous sacrifices."

But each of the others also had his story to tell. Innumerable traits, small or noble, were revealed on these days of festivities and pleasures. And all of them savored somewhat of self-sacrifice.

Mademoiselle Louison's best friend, an

unimportant lady, whose place was almost at the foot of the table, related, despite Louison's protest, how three poor sewing-girls had come to her own lodgings, and how she had made them sew the whole night on her gown for the celebration at the Hippodrome. Moreover, in addition to their wages, she had generously given these poor girls coffee and cake!

Mademoiselle Louison became suddenly an important personage at the table, and the journalist began to show her the most marked attentions.

These many noble incidents of benevolence and Louison's liquid eyes inspired the entire company with a feeling of repose, satisfaction, and sympathy for mankind, which was most eminently fitting to the weariness following the fatigue of the meal.

Indeed, this feeling of comfort mounted even a few degrees higher, when they came to rest themselves in the soft arm-chairs of the little cool salon.

There was no other light here than the glow from the open fireplace. Its ruddy brightness stole softly across the English

carpet and ascended to the golden cornices of the hangings; it played upon the gilded frames of the paintings, touched the piano which stood near the chimney; here and there it fell also upon a face, wonderfully illumining and reclaiming it from the darkness. Otherwise nothing was visible except the red, glowing tips of cigars and cigarettes.

The entertainment began to flag; only a whisper now and then, or the clink of a coffee-cup disturbed the silence.

Every one seemed inclined to surrender himself undistracted to the still enjoyment of his digestive powers and his philanthropic temperament. Even Monsieur Anatole forgot his truffles, while he stretched himself out in the low easy-chair near the sofa, on which Mademoiselle Adele had seated herself.

"Is there no one present who can give us a little music?" inquired Señor de Silvis. "You are always wont to be so obliging, Mademoiselle Adele."

"Oh dear, no—no!" cried Mademoiselle. "I've been eating too heartily!" at the same time, leaning back upon the sofa, she drew

up her little feet, and, with a satisfied air, folded her hands across her breast.

But the stranger, the Irishman, emerged from his corner, and advanced to the piano.

"Oh! you're going to play something for us! Many thanks—Monsieur—hem, Monsieur—" Señor de Silvis had forgotten the name, a thing happening very often, indeed, with his guests.

"You see, he is a musician!" said Mademoiselle Adele to her friend. Anatole answered with a grunt of admiration.

There was something else. The others also perceived it at once, noticing the manner in which he sat down and struck a few chords here and there to awaken the instrument, as it were.

He then began to play—sportively, flightily, frivolously—just as the mood was upon him.

The melodies of the day whirled away into gay waltzes and tuneful glees; all those insignificant popular tunes hummed by all Paris for the past week he snatched up and executed with spirit and fluency.

The ladies cried out with astonishment,

sang a few bars in accompaniment, beat time softly on the floor. The entire company followed him with intense interest. He had gained their sympathy, and carried them away with him from the very beginning. The "lieber Herr Doktor" alone listened with that Sedan smile. Such things were too simple for him.

But soon there was something for even the German. He nodded now and then somewhat approvingly.

A bit of Chopin burst forth and wonderfully accorded with the general temperament —the pungent fragrancy filling the air, the gay women, the men so frank, so unconcerned, each strange to the other, lost in the obscurity of the dusky salon, each following his own most secret thoughts, borne along by the mysterious, half-distinct, half-confused music, while the light of the open fireplace brightened now, now sank back again, causing everything golden to glimmer with a faint, trembling glow.

And now there was still more for the doctor. From time to time he turned towards De Silvis and motioned to him whenever the

harmonious sounds suggested "our Schumann," "our Beethoven," or, indeed, "our famous Richard."

Meanwhile the stranger continued playing, slightly inclined to the left, though without effort, in order to put more force into the bass. It sounded as if he had twenty fingers—all of steel. He knew how to assemble a multitude of tones, so that the instrument itself produced one powerful, united, distinct sound. Not stopping, not marking the transitions, by ever newly recurring surprises, imitations, happy combinations he fixed their attention so firmly that even the most unmusical person was forced to follow him with rapture.

Wholly unnoticed, the music changed its character. The artist played the deep tones uninterruptedly. He then inclined himself more and more upon the left, and there arose a wonderful commotion in the bass. The anabaptists of the *Prophet* approached with heavy steps; a knight from the *Damnation de Faust* mounted from the depths below with that desperate, hobbling, diabolical gallop.

More and more it rumbled and thundered in the deeper tones, and Monsieur Anatole began to feel the truffles anew. Mademoiselle Adele leaned half forward from the sofa; the music would not allow her to rest in peace.

Here and there the chimney-fire was reflected in a pair of black eyes staringly fixed upon the player. He had bewitched them; they could now no longer detach themselves from him; he led them ever deeper down, down, down, where the sound was muffled and gloomily muttered with lamentations and threats.

"He manages his left hand marvellously," said the doctor. But De Silvis did not hear him; like the others, he sat in breathless suspense.

A mysterious, oppressive fear stole out from the music and brooded over the whole assembly.

The artist seemed to clinch his left hand into a fist, which could never again relax, while with his right he cast hither and thither descants of sounds leaping aloft like sparkling flames. It sounded as if some-

thing dismal, horrible had been committed in the cellar, while those up-stairs were dancing, laughing, and amusing themselves under the resplendent candelabra.

There was heard a sigh, a low cry from one of the ladies who felt unwell, but no one took notice of it. The performer was now wholly occupied with the bass, on which he was playing with both hands. His tireless fingers rapidly mingled the sounds together, so that cold chills ran up and down the backs of his hearers.

There was, however, a gradual ascension from the threatening, tumultuous lower sounds to the higher notes. The tones ran into each other, over each other, past each other, upward, ever upward, but never seeming to advance. There arose a wild tumult, a struggle to reach the top. They swarmed like little black demons, fighting, wrangling, full of raging wrath, feverish hurry, climbing, clinging, clinching with hands and teeth, each kicking, crushing the other with its feet, cursing, shrieking, praying—and, meanwhile, his hands glided along the keys so slowly, oh, so painfully slowly!

"Anatole," whispered Mademoiselle Adele, as pale as a ghost, "he is playing the 'Poverty!'"

"Oh, dear!—those truffles!" moaned Anatole, beginning to writhe with pain.

The salon suddenly became as bright as day. Two servants entered from behind the portière with lamps and candelabra. At the same moment the strange musician stopped playing, with all the might of his steeled fingers striking a discord so impossible, so startling that the entire party instantly sprang to their feet.

"Away with the lamps!" cried De Silvis.

"No, no!" shrieked Mademoiselle Adele; "come in with the light. I'm afraid in the dark. Oh, the horrible creature!"

"Who was he?—yes,—who was he?" And they involuntarily thronged round their host. Nor did they notice that the stranger had slipped out behind the servants.

De Silvis tried to laugh it off by saying: "I think it was the devil. Come, let us go to the opera!"

"To the opera? Not for the world," cried Louison. "I won't listen to any music

for a fortnight. Ugh! think of that crowd on the opera stair-way!"

"Oh, my truffles!" howled Anatole.

The company broke up. They all suddenly realized that they were strangers in a strange place. Each one desired to steal away home and be alone by himself.

On accompanying Mademoiselle Louison to her carriage the journalist said: "There, you see, that's the result of allowing one's self to be persuaded to accept the invitations of one of those half-barbarians. One never knows what sort of a crowd one will meet."

"Oh, dear, yes! He has quite put me out of humor," replied Louison, plaintively, all the time lifting her liquid eyes appealingly to him. "But won't you accompany me to Trinity? I know that a quiet mass will be read there at midnight."

The journalist bowed acquiescence, and took his place beside her in the carriage.

While Mademoiselle Adele and Monsieur Anatole, on the other hand, were passing the English apothecary in Rue de la Paix, the latter bade the coachman stop, and said, "No,"

beseechingly to her, "I think I must be put down here and have them give me something for my truffles. You won't be angry with me? But, you see—the music—"

"Please do not let it trouble you in the least, my friend. To be frank, I think that neither of us is in a specially happy mood to-night. Well, good-night! *Auf Wiedersehen* to-morrow!"

She leaned back in the cushions of the carriage. She felt relieved. She was alone. And the frivolous creature wept, as if she had been whipped! She was then driven home.

Of course Anatole was suffering extremely from the truffles, but it seemed to him that he felt better the moment the carriage rolled away.

Since the time that they had become acquainted they were never so satisfied with one another as at this very moment of parting.

But the one who had best recovered from the affair was the "lieber Herr Doktor," for, being a German, he had become inured as far as the music was concerned.

Notwithstanding this, however, he resolved to stroll off to the *brasserie* Müller in Rue Richelieu, to drink over it a good square pint of German beer, with a bit of ham, perhaps.

THE TALL WOMAN.

BY

PEDRO ANTONIO DE ALARCÓN.

THE TALL WOMAN.

I.

"How little we really know, my friends; how little we really know."

The speaker was Gabriel, a distinguished civil engineer of the mountain corps. He was seated under a pine-tree, near a spring, on the crest of the Guadarrama. It was only about a league and a half distant from the palace of the Escurial, on the boundary line of the provinces of Madrid and Segovia. I know the place, spring, pine-tree and all, but I have forgotten its name.

"Let us sit down," went on Gabriel, "as that is the correct thing to do, and as our programme calls for a rest here—here in this pleasant and classic spot, famous for

the digestive properties of that spring, and for the many lambs here devoured by our noted teachers, Don Miguel Bosch, Don Máximo Laguna, Don Augustin Pascual, and other illustrious naturalists. Sit down, and I will tell you a strange and wonderful story in proof of my thesis, which is, though you call me an obscurantist for it, that supernatural events still occur on this terraqueous globe. I mean events which you cannot get into terms of reason, or science, or philosophy — as those 'words, words, words,' in Hamlet's phrase, are understood (or are not understood) to-day."

Gabriel was addressing his animated remarks to five persons of different ages. None of them was young, though only one was well along in years. Three of them were, like Gabriel, engineers; the fourth was a painter, and the fifth was a *littérateur* in a small way. In company with the speaker, who was the youngest, we had all ridden up on hired mules from the Real Sitio de San Lorenzo to spend the day botanizing among the beautiful pine groves of Pequerinos, chasing butterflies with gauze nets, catching

rare beetles under the bark of the decayed pines, and eating a cold lunch out of a hamper which we had paid for on shares.

This took place in 1875. It was the height of the summer. I do not remember whether it was Saint James's day or Saint Louis's; I am inclined to think it was Saint Louis's. Whichever it was, we enjoyed a delicious coolness at that height, and the heart and brain, as well as the stomach, were there in much better working order than usual.

When the six friends were seated, Gabriel continued as follows:

"I do not think you will accuse me of being a visionary. Luckily or unluckily, I am, if you will allow me to say so, a man of the modern world. I have no superstition about me, and am as much of a Positivist as the best of them, although I include among the positive data of nature all the mysterious faculties and feelings of the soul. Well, then, apropos of supernatural, or extra-natural, phenomena, listen to what I have seen and heard, although I was not the real hero of the very strange story I am going to

relate, and then tell me what explanation of an earthly, physical, or natural sort, however you may name it, can be given of so wonderful an occurrence.

"The case was as follows. But wait! Pour me out a drop, for the skin-bottle must have got cooled off by this time in that bubbling, crystalline spring, located by Providence on this piny crest for the express purpose of cooling a botanist's wine."

II.

"Well, gentlemen, I do not know whether you ever heard of an engineer of the roads corps named Telesforo X——; he died in 1860."

"No; I haven't."

"But I have."

"So have I. He was a young fellow from Andalusia, with a black mustache; he was to have married the Marquis of Moreda's daughter, but he died of jaundice."

"The very one," said Gabriel. "Well, then, my friend Telesforo, six months before his death, was still a most promising young

man, as they say nowadays. He was good-looking, well built, energetic, and had the glory of being the first one in his class to be promoted. He had already gained distinction in the practice of his profession through some fine pieces of work. Several different companies were competing for his services, and many marriageable women were also competing for him. But Telesforo, as you said, was faithful to poor Joaquina Moreda.

"As you know, it turned out that she died suddenly at the baths of Santa Águeda, at the end of the summer of 1859. I was in Pau when I received the sad news of her death, which affected me very much on account of my close friendship with Telesforo. With her I had spoken only once, in the house of her aunt, the wife of General Lopez, and I certainly thought her bluish pallor a symptom of bad health. But, however that may be, she had a distinguished manner and a great deal of grace, and was, besides, the only daughter of a title, and a title that carried some comfortable thousands with it; so I felt sure my good mathemati-

cian would be inconsolable. Consequently, as soon as I was back in Madrid, fifteen or twenty days after his loss, I went to see him very early one morning. He lived in elegant bachelor quarters in Lobo Street—I do not remember the number, but it was near the Carrera de San Jerónimo.

"The young engineer was very melancholy, although calm and apparently master of his grief. He was already at work, even at that hour, laboring with his assistants over some railroad plans or other. He was dressed in deep mourning.

"He greeted me with a long and close embrace, without so much as sighing. Then he gave some directions to his assistants about the work in hand, and afterwards led me to his private office at the farther end of the house. As we were on our way there he said, in a sorrowful tone and without glancing at me:

"'I am very glad you have come. Several times I have found myself wishing you were here. A very strange thing has happened to me. Only a friend such as you are can hear of it without thinking me either a fool

or crazy. I want to get an opinion about it as calm and cool as science itself.

"'Sit down,' he went on when we had reached his office, 'and do not imagine that I am going to afflict you with a description of the sorrow I am suffering—a sorrow which will last as long as I live. Why should I? You can easily picture it to yourself, little as you know of trouble. And as for being comforted, I do not wish to be, either now, or later, or ever! What I am going to speak to you about, with the requisite deliberation, going back to the very beginning of the thing, is a horrible and mysterious occurrence, which was an infernal omen of my calamity, and which has distressed me in a frightful manner.'

"'Go on,' I replied, sitting down. The fact was, I almost repented having entered the house, as I saw the expression of abject fear on my friend's face.

"'Listen, then,' said he, wiping the perspiration from his forehead."

III.

"'I do not know whether it is due to some inborn fatality of imagination, or to having heard some story or other of the kind with which children are so rashly allowed to be frightened, but the fact is, that since my earliest years, nothing has caused me so much horror and alarm as a woman alone, in the street, at a late hour of the night. The effect is the same whether I actually encounter her, or simply have an image of her in my mind.

"'You can testify that I was never a coward. I fought a duel once, when I had to, like any other man. Just after I had left the School of Engineers, my workmen in Despeñaperros revolted, and I fought them with stick and pistol until I made them submit. All my life long, in Jaen, in Madrid, and elsewhere, I have walked the streets at all hours, alone and unarmed, and if I have chanced to run upon suspicious-looking persons, thieves, or mere sneaking beggars, they

have had to get out of my way or take to their heels. But if the person turned out to be a solitary woman, standing still or walking, and I was also alone, with no one in sight in any direction—then (laugh if you want to, but believe me) I would be all covered over with goose-flesh; vague fears would assail me; I would think about beings of the other world, about imaginary existences, and about all the superstitious stories which would make me laugh under other circumstances. I would quicken my pace, or else turn back, and would not get over my fright in the least until safe in my own house.

"'Once there I would fall a-laughing, and would be ashamed of my crazy fears. The only comfort I had was that nobody knew anything about it. Then I would dispassionately remind myself that I did not believe in goblins, witches, or ghosts, and that I had no reason whatever to be afraid of that wretched woman driven from her home at such an hour by poverty, or some crime, or accident, to whom I might better have offered help, if she needed it, or given alms. Nevertheless, the pitiable scene would be

gone over again as often as a similar thing occurred—and remember that I was twenty-four years old, that I had experienced a great many adventures by night, and yet that I had never had the slightest difficulty of any sort with such solitary women in the streets after midnight! But nothing of what I have so far told you ever came to have any importance, since that irrational fear always left me as soon as I reached home, or saw any one else in the street, and I would scarcely recall it a few minutes afterwards, any more than one would recall a stupid mistake which had no result of any consequence.

"'Things were going on so, when, nearly three years ago (unhappily, I have good reason for knowing the date, it was the night of November 15–16, 1857), I was coming home at three in the morning. As you remember, I was living then in that little house in Jardines Street, near Montera Street. I had just come, at that late hour, a bitter, cold wind blowing at the time, out of a sort of a gambling-house—I tell you this, although I know it will surprise you. You know that I am not a gambler. I went into the place.

deceived by an alleged friend. But the fact was, that as people began to drop in about midnight, coming from receptions or the theatre, the play began to be very heavy, and one saw the gleam of gold in plenty. Then came bank-bills, and notes of hand. Little by little I was carried away by the feverish and seductive passion, and lost all the money I had. I even went away owing a round sum, for which I had left my note behind me. In short, I ruined myself completely; and but for the legacy that came to me afterwards, together with the good jobs I have had, my situation would have been extremely critical and painful.

"'So I was going home, I say, at so late an hour that night, numb with the cold, hungry, ashamed, and disgusted as you can imagine, thinking about my sick old father more than about myself. I should have to write to him for money, and this would astonish as much as it would grieve him, since he thought me in very easy circumstances. Just before reaching my street, where it crosses Peligros Street, as I was walking in front of a newly built house, I perceived something in its

door-way. It was a tall, large woman, standing stiff and motionless, as if made of wood. She seemed to be about sixty years old. Her bold and malignant eyes, unshaded by eyelashes, were fixed on mine like two daggers. Her toothless mouth made a horrible grimace at me, meant to be a smile.

"'The very terror or delirium of fear which instantly overcame me gave me somehow a most acute perception, so that I could distinguish at a glance, in the two seconds it took me to pass by that repugnant vision, the slightest details of her face and dress. Let me see if I can put together my impressions in the way and form in which I received them, as they were engraved ineffaceably on my brain in the light of the street-lamp which shone luridly over that ghastly scene. But I am exciting myself too much, though there is reason enough for it, as you will see further on. Don't be concerned, however, for the state of my mind. I am not yet crazy!

"'The first thing which struck me in that *woman*, as I will call her, was her extreme height and the breadth of her bony shoul-

ders. Then, the roundness and fixity of her dry, owl-eyes, the enormous size of her protruding nose, and the great dark cavern of her mouth. Finally, her dress, like that of a young woman of Avapiés—the new little cotton handkerchief which she wore on her head, tied under her chin, and a diminutive fan which she carried opened in her hand, and with which, in affected modesty, she was covering the middle of her waist.

"'Nothing could be at the same time more ridiculous and more awful, more laughable and more taunting, than that little fan in those huge hands. It seemed like a make-believe sceptre in the hands of such an old, hideous, and bony giantess! A like effect was produced by the showy percale handkerchief adorning her face by the side of that cut-water nose, hooked and masculine; for a moment I was led to believe (or I was very glad to) that it was a man in disguise.

"'But her cynical glance and harsh smile were those of a hag, of a witch, an enchantress, a Fate, a—I know not what! There was something about her to justify fully the aversion and fright which I had been caused

all my life long by women walking alone in the streets at night. One would have said that I had had a presentiment of that encounter from my cradle. One would have said that I was frightened by it instinctively, as every living being fears and divines, and scents and recognizes, its natural enemy before ever being injured by it, before ever having seen it, and solely on hearing its tread.

"'I did not dash away in a run when I saw my life's sphinx. I restrained my impulse to do so, less out of shame and manly pride than out of fear lest my very fright should reveal to her who I was, or should give her wings to follow me, to overtake me —I do not know what. Panic like that dreams of dangers which have neither form nor name.

"'My house was at the opposite end of the long and narrow street, in which I was alone, entirely alone with that mysterious phantom whom I thought able to annihilate me with a word. How should I ever get home? Oh, how anxiously I looked towards that distant Montera Street, broad and well lighted,

where there are policemen to be found at all hours! I decided, finally, to get the better of my weakness; to dissemble and hide that wretched fear; not to hasten my pace, but to keep on advancing slowly, even at the cost of years of health or life, and in this way, little by little, to go on getting nearer to my house, exerting myself to the utmost not to fall fainting on the ground before I reached it.

"'I was walking along in this way—I must have taken about twenty steps after leaving behind me the door-way where the woman with the fan was hidden, when suddenly a horrible idea came to me—horrible, yet very natural nevertheless—the idea that I would look back to see if my enemy was following me. One thing or the other I thought, with the rapidity of a flash of lightning: either my alarm has some foundation or it is madness; if it has any foundation, this woman will have started after me, will be overtaking me, and there is no hope for me on earth. But if it is madness, a mere supposition, a panic fright like any other, I will convince myself of it in the present instance, and for

every case that may occur hereafter, by seeing that that poor old woman has stayed in that door-way to protect herself from the cold, or to wait till the door is opened; and thereupon I can go on to my house in perfect tranquillity, and I shall have cured myself of a fancy that causes me great mortification.

"'This reasoning gone through with, I made an extraordinary effort and turned my head. Ah, Gabriel!—Gabriel! how fearful it was! The tall woman had followed me with silent tread, was right over me, almost touching me with her fan, almost leaning her head on my shoulder.

"'Why was she doing it?—why, my Gabriel? Was she a thief? Was she really a man in disguise? Was she some malicious old hag who had seen that I was afraid of her? Was she a spectre conjured up by my very cowardice? Was she a mocking phantasm of human self-deception?

"'I could never tell you all I thought in a single moment. If the truth must be told, I gave a scream and flew away like a child of four years who thinks he sees the Black

Man. I did not stop running until I got out into Montera Street. Once there, my fear left me like magic. This in spite of the fact that that street also was deserted. Then I turned my head to look back to Jardines Street. I could see down its whole length. It was lighted well enough for me to see the tall woman, if she had drawn back in any direction, and, by Heaven! I could not see her, standing still, walking, or in any way! However, I was very careful not to go back into that street again. The wretch, I said to myself, has slunk into some other door-way. But she can't move without my seeing her.

"'Just then I saw a policeman coming up Caballero de Gracia Street, and I shouted to him without stirring from my place. I told him that there was a man dressed as a woman in Jardines Street. I directed him to go round by the way of Peligros and Aduana streets, while I would remain where I was, and in that way the fellow, who was probably a thief or murderer, could not escape us. The policeman did as I said. He went through Aduana Street, and as soon

as I saw his lantern coming along Jardines Street I also went up it resolutely.

"'We soon met at about the middle of the block, without either of us having encountered a soul, although we had examined door after door.

"'"He has got into some house," said the policeman.

"'That must be so, I replied, opening my door with the fixed purpose of moving to some other street the next day.

"'A few moments later I was in my room; I always carried my latch-key, so as not to have to disturb my good José. Nevertheless, he was waiting for me that night. My misfortunes of the 15th and 16th of November were not yet ended.

"'What has happened? I asked him, in surprise.

"'"Major Falcón was here," he replied, with evident agitation, "waiting for you from eleven till half-past two, and he told me that, if you came home to sleep, you had better not undress, as he would be back at daybreak."

"'Those words left me trembling with grief

and alarm, as if they had predicted my own death to me. I knew that my beloved father, at his home in Jaen, had been suffering frequent and dangerous attacks of his chronic disease. I had written to my brothers that, if there should be a sudden and fatal termination of the sickness, they were to telegraph Major Falcón, who would inform me in some suitable way. I had not the slightest doubt, therefore, that my father had died.

"'I sat down in an arm-chair to wait for the morning and my friend, and, with them, the news of my great misfortune. God only knows what I suffered in those two cruel hours of waiting. All the while, three distinct ideas were inseparably joined in my mind; though they seemed unlike, they took pains, as it were, to keep in a dreadful group. They were: my losses at play, my meeting with the tall woman, and the death of my revered father.

"'Precisely at six Major Falcón came into my room, and looked at me in silence. I threw myself into his arms, weeping bitterly, and he exclaimed, caressing me:

"'"Yes, my dear fellow, weep, weep."

IV.

"My friend Telesforo," Gabriel went on, after having drained another glass of wine, "also rested a moment when he reached this point, and then he proceeded as follows:

"'If my story ended here, perhaps you would not find anything extraordinary or supernatural in it. You would say to me the same thing that men of good judgment said to me at that time: that every one who has a lively imagination is subject to some impulse of fear or other; that mine came from belated, solitary women, and that the old creature of Jardines Street was only some homeless waif who was going to beg of me when I screamed and ran.

"'For my part, I tried to believe that it was so. I even came to believe it at the end of several months. Still, I would have given years of my life to be sure that I was not again to encounter the tall woman. But, to-day, I would give every drop of my blood to be able to meet her again.'

"What for?

"'To kill her on the spot.'

"I do not understand you.

"'You will understand me when I tell you that I did meet her again, three weeks ago, a few hours before I had the fatal news of my poor Joaquina's death.'

"Tell me about it, tell me about it!

"'There is little more to tell. It was five o'clock in the morning. It was not yet fully light, though the dawn was visible from the streets looking towards the east. The street-lamps had just been put out, and the policemen had withdrawn. As I was going through Prado Street, so as to get to the other end of Lobo Street, the dreadful woman crossed in front of me. She did not look at me, and I thought she had not seen me.

"'She wore the same dress and carried the same fan as three years before. My trepidation and alarm were greater than ever. I ran rapidly across Prado Street as soon as she had passed, although I did not take my eyes off her, so as to make sure that she did not look back, and, when I had reached the other end of Lobo Street, I panted as if I

had just swum an impetuous stream. Then I pressed on with fresh speed towards home, filled now with gladness rather than fear, for I thought that the hateful witch had been conquered and shorn of her power, from the very fact that I had been so near her and yet that she had not seen me.

"'But soon, and when I had almost reached this house, a rush of fear swept over me, in the thought that the crafty old hag had seen and recognized me, that she had made a pretence of not knowing me so as to let me get into Lobo Street, where it was still rather dark, and where she might set upon me in safety, that she would follow me, that she was already over me.

"'Upon this, I looked around—and there she was! There at my shoulder, almost touching me with her clothes, gazing at me with her horrible little eyes, displaying the gloomy cavern of her mouth, fanning herself in a mocking manner, as if to make fun of my childish alarm.

"'I passed from dread to the most furious anger, to savage and desperate rage. I dashed at the heavy old creature. I flung

her against the wall. I put my hand to her throat. I felt of her face, her breast, the straggling locks of her gray hair, until I was thoroughly convinced that she was a human being—a woman.

"'Meanwhile she had uttered a howl which was hoarse and piercing at the same time. It seemed false and feigned to me, like the hypocritical expression of a fear which she did not really feel. Immediately afterwards she exclaimed, making believe cry, though she was not crying, but looking at me with her hyena eyes:

"'"Why have you picked a quarrel with me?"

"'This remark increased my fright and weakened my wrath.

"'Then you remember, I cried, that you have seen me somewhere else.

"'"I should say so, my dear," she replied, mockingly. "Saint Eugene's night, in Jardines Street, three years ago."

"'My very marrow was chilled.

"'But who are you? I asked, without letting go of her. Why do you follow me? What business have you with me?

"'"I am a poor weak woman," she answered, with a devilish leer. "You hate me, and you are afraid of me without any reason. If not, tell me, good sir, why you were so frightened the first time you saw me."

"'Because I have loathed you ever since I was born. Because you are the evil spirit of my life.

"'"It seems, then, that you have known me for a long time. Well, look, my son, so have I known you."

"'You have known me? How long?

"'"Since before you were born! And when I saw you pass by me, three years ago, I said to myself, *that's the one.*"

"'But what am I to you? What are you to me?

"'"The devil!" replied the hag, spitting full in my face, freeing herself from my grasp, and running away with amazing swiftness. She held her skirts higher than her knees, and her feet did not make the slightest noise as they touched the ground.

"'It was madness to try to catch her. Besides, people were already passing through the Carrera de San Jerónimo, and in Pra-

do Street, too. It was broad daylight. The tall woman kept on running, or flying, as far as Huertas Street, which was now lighted up by the sun. There she stopped to look back at me. She waved her closed fan at me once or twice, threateningly, and then disappeared around a corner.

"'Wait a little longer, Gabriel. Do not yet pronounce judgment in this case, where my life and soul are concerned. Listen to me two minutes longer.

"'When I entered my house I met Colonel Falcón, who had just come to tell me that my Joaquina, my betrothed, all my hope and happiness and joy on earth, had died the day before in Santa Águeda. The unfortunate father had telegraphed Falcón to tell me—me, who should have divined it an hour before, when I met the evil spirit of my life! Don't you understand, now, that I must kill that born enemy of my happiness, that vile old hag, who is the living mockery of my destiny?

"'But why do I say kill? Is she a woman? Is she a human being? Why have I had a presentiment of her ever since I was

born? Why did she recognize me when she first saw me? Why do I never see her except when some great calamity has befallen me? Is she Satan? Is she Death? Is she Life? Is she Antichrist? Who is she? What is she?'"

V.

"I will spare you, my dear friends," continued Gabriel, "the arguments and remarks which I used to see if I could not calm Telesforo, for they are the same, precisely the same, which you are preparing now to advance to prove that there is nothing supernatural or superhuman in my story. You will even go further; you will say that my friend was half crazy; that he always was so; that, at least, he suffered from that moral disease which some call 'panic terror,' and others 'emotional insanity;' that, even granting the truth of what I have related about the tall woman, it must all be referred to chance coincidences of dates and events; and, finally, that the poor old creature could also have been crazy, or a thief, or a beggar,

or a procuress—as the hero of my story said to himself in a lucid interval."

"A very proper supposition!" exclaimed Gabriel's comrades; "that is just what we were going to say."

"Well, listen a few minutes longer, and you will see that I was mistaken at the time, as you are mistaken now. The one who unfortunately made no mistake was Telesforo. It is much easier to speak the word 'insanity' than to find an explanation for some things that happen on the earth."

"Speak, speak!"

"I am going to; and this time, as it is the last, I will pick up the thread of my story without first drinking a glass of wine."

VI.

"A few days after that conversation with Telesforo I was sent to the province of Albacete in my capacity as engineer of the mountain corps. Not many weeks had passed before I learned, from a contractor for public works, that my unhappy friend had been attacked by a dreadful form of

jaundice; it had turned him entirely green, and he reclined in an arm-chair without working or wishing to see anybody, weeping night and day in the most inconsolable and bitter grief. The doctors had given up hope of his getting well.

"This made me understand why he had not answered my letters. I had to resort to Colonel Falcón as a source of news of him, and all the while the reports kept getting more unfavorable and gloomy.

"After an absence of five months I returned to Madrid the same day that the telegraph brought the news of the battle of Tetuan. I remember it as if it were yesterday. That night I bought the indispensable *Correspondencia de España*, and the first thing I read in it was the notice of Telesforo's death. His friends were invited to the funeral the following morning.

"You will be sure that I was present. As we arrived at the San Luis cemetery, whither I rode in one of the carriages nearest the hearse, my attention was called to a peasant woman. She was old and very tall. She was laughing sacrilegiously as she

saw them taking out the coffin. Then she placed herself in front of the pall-bearers in a triumphant attitude and pointed out to them with a very small fan the passage-way they were to take to reach the open and waiting grave.

"At the first glance I perceived, with amazement and alarm, that she was Telesforo's implacable enemy. She was just as he had described her to me—with her enormous nose, her devilish eyes, her awful mouth, her percale handkerchief, and that diminutive fan which seemed in her hands the sceptre of indecency and mockery.

"She immediately observed that I was looking at her, and fixed her gaze upon me in a peculiar manner, as if recognizing me, as if letting me know that she recognized me, as if acquainted with the fact that the dead man had told me about the scenes in Jardines Street and Lobo Street, as if defying me, as if declaring me the inheritor of the hate which she had cherished for my unfortunate friend.

"I confess that at the time my fright was greater than my wonder at those new

coincidences and *accidents*. It seemed evident to me that some supernatural relation, antecedent to earthly life, had existed between the mysterious old woman and Telesforo. But for the time being my sole concern was about my own life, my own soul, my own happiness—all of which would be exposed to the greatest peril if I should really inherit such a curse.

"The tall woman began to laugh. She pointed at me contemptuously with the fan, as if she had read my thoughts and were publicly exposing my cowardice. I had to lean on a friend's arm to keep myself from falling. Then she made a pitying or disdainful gesture, turned on her heels, and went into the cemetery. Her head was turned towards me. She fanned herself and nodded to me at the same time. She sidled along among the graves with an indescribable, infernal coquetry until at last she disappeared forever in that labyrinth of tombs.

"I say forever, since fifteen years have passed and I have never seen her again. If she was a human being she must have died before this; if she was not, I rest in the con-

viction that she despised me too much to meddle with me.

"Now, then, bring on your theories! Give me your opinion about these strange events. Do you still regard them as entirely natural?"

ON THE RIVER.

BY

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

113

ON THE RIVER.

I HAD rented, last summer, a little country house on the banks of the Seine a few miles from Paris, and I used to go down there every night to sleep. In a few days I made the acquaintance of one of my neighbors, a man between thirty and forty, who was certainly the most curious type that I had ever met. He was an old rowing man, crazy about rowing, always near the water, always on the water, always in the water. He must have been born in a boat, and he would certainly die in a boat at last.

One night, while we were walking together along the Seine, I asked him to tell me some stories about his life upon the river; and at that the good man suddenly became

animated, transfigured, eloquent, almost poetical! In his heart there was one great passion, devouring and irresistible — the river.

"Ah!" said he to me, "how many memories I have of that river which is flowing there beside us. You people who live in streets, you don't know what the river is. But just listen to a fisherman simply pronouncing the word. For him it is the thing mysterious, the thing profound, unknown, the country of mirage and of phantasmagoria, where one sees, at night, things which do not exist, where one hears strange noises, where one trembles causelessly, as though crossing a graveyard. And it is, indeed, the most sinister of graveyards—a graveyard where there are no tombstones.

"To the fisherman the land seems limited, but of dark nights, when there is no moon, the river seems limitless. Sailors have no such feeling for the sea. Hard she often is and wicked, the great Sea; but she cries, she shouts, she deals with you fairly, while the river is silent and treacherous. It never even mutters, it flows ever noiselessly,

and this eternal flowing movement of water terrifies me far more than the high seas of ocean.

"Dreamers pretend that the Sea hides in her breast great blue regions where drowned men roll to and fro among the huge fish, in the midst of strange forests and in crystal grottos. The river has only black depths, where one rots in the slime. For all that it is beautiful when it glitters in the rising sun or swashes softly along between its banks where the reeds murmur.

"The poet says of the ocean:

"'Oh seas, you know sad stories! Deep seas, feared by kneeling mothers, you tell the stories to one another at flood tides! And that is why you have such despairing voices when at night you come towards us nearer and nearer.'

"Well, I think that the stories murmured by the slender reeds with their little soft voices must be yet more sinister than the gloomy dramas told by the howling of the high seas.

"But, since you ask for some of my recollections, I will tell you a curious ad-

venture which I had here about ten years ago.

"I then lived, as I still do, in the house of the old lady Lafon, and one of my best chums, Louis Bernet, who has now given up for the Civil Service his oars, his low shoes, and his sleeveless jersey, lived in the village of C——, two leagues farther down. We dined together every day—sometimes at his place, sometimes at mine.

"One evening as I was returning home alone and rather tired, wearily pulling my heavy boat, a twelve-footer, which I always used at night, I stopped a few seconds to take breath near the point where so many reeds grow, down that way, about two hundred metres before you come to the railroad bridge. It was a beautiful night; the moon was resplendent, the river glittered, the air was calm and soft. The tranquillity of it all tempted me; I said to myself that to smoke a pipe just here would be extremely nice. Action followed upon the thought; I seized my anchor and threw it into the stream.

"The boat, which floated down again with the current, pulled the chain out to its full

length, then stopped; and I seated myself in the stern on a sheepskin, as comfortable as possible. One heard no sound—no sound; only sometimes I thought I was aware of a low, almost insensible lapping of the water along the bank, and I made out some groups of reeds which, taller than their fellows, took on surprising shapes, and seemed from time to time to stir.

"The river was perfectly still, but I felt myself moved by the extraordinary silence which surrounded me. All the animals—the frogs and toads, those nocturnal singers of the marshes—were silent. Suddenly on my right, near me, a frog croaked; I started; it was silent; I heard nothing more, and I resolved to smoke a little by way of a distraction. But though I am, so to speak, a regular blackener of pipes, I could not smoke that night; after the second puff I sickened of it, and I stopped. I began to hum a tune; the sound of my voice was painful to me; so I stretched myself out in the bottom of the boat and contemplated the sky. For some time I remained quiet, but soon the slight movements of the boat

began to make me uneasy. I thought that it was yawing tremendously, striking now this bank of the stream, and now that; then I thought that some Being or some invisible force was dragging it down gently to the bottom of the water, and then was lifting it up simply to let it fall again. I was tossed about as though in the midst of a storm; I heard noises all around me; with a sudden start I sat upright; the water sparkled, everything was calm.

"I saw that my nerves were unsettled, and I decided to go. I pulled in the chain; the boat moved; then I was conscious of resistance; I pulled harder; the anchor did not come up, it had caught on something at the bottom of the river and I could not lift it. I pulled again—in vain. With my oars I got the boat round up-stream in order to change the position of the anchor. It was no use; the anchor still held. I grew angry, and in a rage I shook the chain. Nothing moved. There was no hope of breaking the chain, or of getting it loose from my craft, because it was very heavy, and riveted at the bow into a bar of wood thicker than my

arm; but since the weather continued fine, I reflected that I should not have to wait long before meeting some fisherman, who would come to my rescue. My mishap had calmed me; I sat down, and I was now able to smoke my pipe. I had a flask of brandy with me; I drank two or three glasses, and my situation made me laugh. It was very hot, so that, if needs must, I could pass the night under the stars without inconvenience.

"Suddenly a little knock sounded against the side. I started, and a cold perspiration froze me from head to foot. The noise came, no doubt, from some bit of wood drawn along by the current, but it was enough, and I felt myself again overpowered by a strange nervous agitation. I seized the chain, and I stiffened myself in a desperate effort. The anchor held. I sat down exhausted.

"But, little by little, the river had covered itself with a very thick white mist, which crept low over the water, so that, standing up, I could no longer see either the stream or my feet or my boat, and saw only the

tips of the reeds, and then, beyond them, the plain, all pale in the moonlight, and with great black stains which rose towards heaven, and which were made by clumps of Italian poplars. I was as though wrapped to the waist in a cotton sheet of a strange whiteness, and there began to come to me weird imaginations. I imagined that some one was trying to climb into my boat, since I could no longer see it, and that the river, hidden by this opaque mist, must be full of strange creatures swimming about me. I experienced a horrible uneasiness, I had a tightening at the temples, my heart beat to suffocation; and, losing my head, I thought of escaping by swimming; then in an instant the very idea made me shiver with fright. I saw myself lost, drifting hither and thither in this impenetrable mist, struggling among the long grass and the reeds which I should not be able to avoid, with a rattle in my throat from fear, not seeing the shore, not finding my boat. And it seemed to me as though I felt myself being drawn by the feet down to the bottom of this black water.

"In fact, since I should have had to swim

up stream at least five hundred metres before finding a point clear of rushes and reeds, where I could get a footing, there were nine chances to one that, however good a swimmer I might be, I should lose my bearings in the fog and drown.

"I tried to reason with myself. I realized that my will was firmly enough resolved against fear; but there was something in me beside my will, and it was this which felt afraid. I asked myself what it could be that I dreaded; that part of me which was courageous railed at that part of me which was cowardly; and I never had comprehended so well before the opposition between those two beings which exist within us, the one willing, the other resisting, and each in turn getting the mastery.

"This stupid and inexplicable fear grew until it became terror. I remained motionless, my eyes wide open, with a strained and expectant ear. Expecting — what? I did not know save that it would be something terrible. I believe that if a fish, as often happens, had taken it into its head to jump out of the water, it would have needed only

that to make me fall stark on my back into a faint.

"And yet, finally, by a violent effort, I very nearly recovered the reason which had been escaping me. I again took my brandy-flask, and out of it I drank great draughts. Then an idea struck me, and I began to shout with all my might, turning in succession towards all four quarters of the horizon. When my throat was completely paralyzed, I listened. A dog howled, a long way off.

"Again I drank; and I lay down on my back in the bottom of the boat. So I remained for one hour, perhaps for two, sleepless, my eyes wide-open, with nightmares all about me. I did not dare to sit up, and yet I had a wild desire to do so; I kept putting it off from minute to minute. I would say to myself: "Come! get up!" and I was afraid to make a movement. At last I raised myself with infinite precaution, as if life depended on my making not the slightest sound, and I peered over the edge of the boat.

"I was dazzled by the most marvellous, the most astonishing spectacle that it can be possible to see. It was one of those phan-

tasmagoria from fairy-land; it was one of those visions described by travellers returned out of far countries, and which we hear without believing.

"The mist, which two hours before was floating over the water, had gradually withdrawn and piled itself upon the banks. Leaving the river absolutely clear, it had formed, along each shore, long low hills about six or seven metres high, which glittered under the moon with the brilliancy of snow, so that one saw nothing except this river of fire coming down these two white mountains; and there, high above my head, a great, luminous moon, full and large, displayed herself upon a blue and milky sky.

"All the denizens of the water had awaked; the bull-frogs croaked furiously, while, from instant to instant, now on my right, now on my left, I heard those short, mournful, monotonous notes which the brassy voices of the marsh-frogs give forth to the stars. Strangely enough, I was no longer afraid; I was in the midst of such an extraordinary landscape that the most curious things could not have astonished me.

"How long the sight lasted I do not know, because at last I had grown drowsy. When I again opened my eyes the moon had set, the heaven was full of clouds. The water lashed mournfully, the wind whispered, it grew cold, the darkness was profound.

"I drank all the brandy I had left; then I listened shiveringly to the rustling of the reeds and to the sinister noise of the river. I tried to see, but I could not make out the boat nor even my own hands, though I raised them close to my eyes.

"However, little by little the density of the blackness diminished. Suddenly I thought I felt a shadow slipping along near by me; I uttered a cry; a voice replied—it was a fisherman. I hailed him; he approached, and I told him of my mishap. He pulled his boat alongside, and both together we heaved at the chain. The anchor did not budge. The day came on—sombre, gray, rainy, cold—one of those days which bring always a sorrow and a misfortune. I made out another craft; we hailed it. The man aboard of it joined his efforts to ours, then,

little by little, the anchor yielded. It came up, but slowly, slowly, and weighted down by something very heavy. At last we perceived a black mass, and we pulled it alongside.

"It was the corpse of an old woman with a great stone round her neck."

MAESE PÉREZ, THE ORGANIST.

BY

GUSTAVO ADOLFO BECQUER.

MAESE PÉREZ, THE ORGANIST.

I.

"Do you see that man with the scarlet cloak and the white plume in his hat and the gold-embroidered vest? I mean the one just getting out of his litter and going to greet that lady—the one coming along after those four pages who are carrying torches? Well, that is the Marquis of Mascoso, lover of the widow, the Countess of Villapineda. They say that before he began paying court to her he had sought the hand of a very wealthy man's daughter, but the girl's father, who they say is a trifle close-fisted—but hush! Speaking of the devil—do you see that man closely wrapped in his cloak

coming on foot under the arch of San Felipe? Well, he is the father in question. Everybody in Seville knows him on account of his immense fortune.

"Look—look at that group of stately men! They are the twenty-four knights. Aha! there's that Fleming, too. They say that the gentlemen of the green cross have not challenged him yet, thanks to his influence with the great ones at Madrid. All he comes to church for is to hear the music.

"Alas! neighbor, that looks bad. I fear there's going to be a scuffle. I shall take refuge in the church, for, according to my guess, there will be more blows than *Paternosters*. Look, look! the Duke of Alcalá's people are coming round the corner of Saint Peter's Square, and I think I see the Duke of Medinasidonia's men in Dueñas Alley. Didn't I tell you? There—there! The blows are beginning. Neighbor, neighbor, this way before they close the doors!

"But what's that? They've left off. What's that light? Torches! a litter! It's the bishop himself! God preserve him in his office as many centuries as I desire to

live myself! If it were not for him, half Seville would have been burned up by this time with these quarrels of the dukes. Look at them, look at them, the hypocrites, how they both press forward to kiss the bishop's ring!

"But come, neighbor — come into the church before it is packed full. Some nights like this it is so crowded that you could not get in if you were no larger than a grain of wheat. The nuns have a prize in their organist. Other sisterhoods have made Maese Pérez magnificent offers; nothing strange about that, though, for the very archbishop has offered him mountains of gold if he would go to the cathedral. But he would not listen to them. He would sooner die than give up his beloved organ. You don't know Maese Pérez? Oh, I forgot you had just come to the neighborhood. Well, he is a holy man; poor, to be sure, but as charitable as any man that ever lived. With no relative but a daughter, and no friend but his organ, he spends all his time in caring for the one and repairing the other. The organ is an old affair, you must know;

but that makes no difference to him. He handles it so that its tone is a wonder. How he does know it! and all by touch, too, for did I tell you that the poor man was born blind?

"Humble, too, as the very stones. He always says that he is only a poor convent organist, when the fact is he could give lessons in *sol fa* to the very chapel master of the primate. You see, he began before he had teeth. His father had the same position before him, and as the boy showed such talent, it was very natural that he should succeed his father when the latter died. And what a touch he has, God bless him! He always plays well, always; but on a night like this he is wonderful. He has the greatest devotion to this Christmas Eve mass, and when the host is elevated, precisely at twelve o'clock, which is the time that Our Lord came into the world, his organ sounds like the voices of angels.

"But why need I try to tell you about what you are going to hear to-night? It is enough for you to see that all the elegance of Seville, the very archbishop included,

comes to a humble convent to listen to him. And it is not only the learned people who can understand his skill that come; the common people, too, swarm to the church, and are as still as the dead when Maese Pérez puts his hands to the organ. And when the host is elevated, when the host is elevated, then you can't hear a fly. Great tears fall from every eye, and when the music is over a long-drawn sigh is heard, showing how the people have been holding their breath all through.

"But come, come, the bells have stopped ringing, and the mass is going to begin. Hurry in. This is Christmas Eve for everybody, but for no one is it a greater occasion than for us."

So saying, the good woman who had been acting as *cicerone* for her neighbor pressed through the portico of the Convent of Santa Inés, and elbowing this one and pushing the other, succeeded in getting inside the church, forcing her way through the multitude that was crowding about the door.

II.

The church was profusely lighted. The flood of light which fell from the altars glanced from the rich jewels of the great ladies, who, kneeling upon velvet cushions placed before them by pages, and taking their prayer-books from the hands of female attendants, formed a brilliant circle around the chancel lattice. Standing next that lattice, wrapped in their richly colored and embroidered cloaks, letting their green and red orders be seen with studied carelessness, holding in one hand their hats, the plumes sweeping the floor, and letting the other rest upon the polished hilts of rapiers or the jewelled handles of daggers, the twenty-four knights, and a large part of the highest nobility of Seville, seemed to be forming a wall for the purpose of keeping their wives and daughters from contact with the populace. The latter, swaying back and forth at the rear of the nave, with a noise like that of a rising surf, broke out into joyous acclama-

tions as the archbishop was seen to come in. That dignitary seated himself near the high altar under a scarlet canopy, surrounded by his attendants, and three times blessed the people.

It was time for the mass to begin.

Nevertheless, several minutes passed before the celebrant appeared. The multitude commenced to murmur impatiently; the knights exchanged words with each other in a low tone; and the archbishop sent one of his attendants to the sacristan to inquire why the ceremony did not begin.

"Maese Pérez has fallen sick, very sick, and it will be impossible for him to come to the midnight mass."

This was the word brought back by the attendant.

The news ran instantly through the crowd. The disturbance caused by it was so great that the chief judge rose to his feet, and the officers came into the church, to enforce silence.

Just then a man of unpleasant face, thin, bony, and cross-eyed too, pushed up to the place where the archbishop was sitting.

"Maese Pérez is sick," he said; "the ceremony cannot begin. If you see fit, I will play the organ in his absence. Maese Pérez is not the best organist in the world, nor need this instrument be left unused after his death for lack of any one able to play it."

The archbishop nodded his head in assent, although some of the faithful, who had already recognized in that strange person an envious rival of the organist of Santa Inés, were breaking out in cries of displeasure. Suddenly a surprising noise was heard in the portico.

"Maese Pérez is here! Maese Pérez is here!"

At this shout, coming from those jammed in by the door, every one looked around.

Maese Pérez, pale and feeble, was in fact entering the church, brought in a chair which all were quarrelling for the honor of carrying upon their shoulders.

The commands of the physicians, the tears of his daughter—nothing had been able to keep him in bed.

"No," he had said; "this is the last one, I know it. I know it, and I do not want

to die without visiting my organ again, this night above all, this Christmas Eve. Come, I desire it, I order it; come, to the church!"

His desire had been gratified. The people carried him in their arms to the organ-loft. The mass began.

Twelve struck on the cathedral clock.

The introit came, then the Gospel, then the offertory, and the moment arrived when the priest, after consecrating the sacred wafer, took it in his hands and began to elevate it. A cloud of incense filled the church in bluish undulations. The little bells rang out in vibrating peals, and Maese Pérez placed his aged fingers upon the organ keys.

The multitudinous voices of the metal tubes gave forth a prolonged and majestic chord, which died away little by little, as if a gentle breeze had borne away its last echoes.

To this opening burst, which seemed like a voice lifted up to heaven from earth, responded a sweet and distant note, which went on swelling and swelling in volume until it became a torrent of overpowering

harmony. It was the voice of the angels, traversing space, and reaching the world.

Then distant hymns began to be heard, intoned by the hierarchies of seraphim; a thousand hymns at once, mingling to form a single one, though this one was only an accompaniment to a strange melody which seemed to float above that ocean of mysterious echoes, as a strip of fog above the waves of the sea.

One song after another died away. The movement grew simpler. Now only two voices were heard, whose echoes blended. Then but one remained, and alone sustained a note as brilliant as a thread of light. The priest bowed his face, and above his gray head appeared the host. At that moment the note which Maese Pérez was holding began to swell, and swell, and an explosion of unspeakable joy filled the church.

From each of the notes forming that magnificent chord, a theme was developed; and some near, others far away, these brilliant, those muffled, one would have said that the waters and the birds, the breezes and the forests, men and angels, earth and heaven,

were singing, each in its own language, a hymn in praise of the Saviour's birth.

The people listened, amazed and breathless. The officiating priest felt his hands trembling; for it seemed as if he had seen the heavens opened and the host transfigured.

The organ kept on, but its voice sank away gradually, like a tone going from echo to echo, and dying as it goes. Suddenly a cry was heard in the organ-loft—a piercing, shrill cry, the cry of a woman.

The organ gave a strange, discordant sound, like a sob, and then was silent.

The multitude flocked to the stairs leading up to the organ-loft, towards which the anxious gaze of the faithful was turned.

"What has happened? What is the matter?" one asked the other, and no one knew what to reply. The confusion increased. The excitement threatened to disturb the good order and decorum fitting within a church.

"What was that?" asked the great ladies of the chief judge. He had been one of the first to ascend to the organ-loft. Now, pale

and displaying signs of deep grief, he was going to the archbishop, who was anxious, like everybody else, to know the cause of the disturbance.

"What's the matter?"

"Maese Pérez has just expired."

In fact, when the first of the faithful rushed up the stair-way, and reached the organ-loft, they saw the poor organist fallen face down upon the keys of his old instrument, which was still vibrating, while his daughter, kneeling at his feet, was vainly calling to him with tears and sobs.

III.

"Good-evening, my dear Doña Baltasara. Are you also going to-night to the Christmas Eve mass? For my part, I was intending to go to the parish church to hear it, but what has happened—where is Vicente going, do you ask? Why, where the crowd goes. And, I must say, to tell the truth, that ever since Maese Pérez died it seems as if a marble slab was on my heart whenever I go to Santa Inés. Poor dear man! He was

a saint! I know one thing—I keep a piece of his cloak as a relic, and he deserves it. I solemnly believe that if the archbishop would stir in the matter, our grandchildren would see his image among the saints on the altars. But, of course, he won't do that. The dead and absent have no friends, as they say. It's all the latest thing, nowadays; you understand me. What? You do not know what has happened? Well, it's true you are not exactly in our situation. From our house to the church, and from the church to our house—a word here and another one there—on the wing—without any curiosity whatever—I easily find out all the news.

"Well, then, it's a settled thing that the organist of San Roman—that squint-eye, who is always slandering other organists—that great blunderer, who seems more like a butcher than a master of *sol fa*—is going to play this Christmas Eve in Maese Pérez's old place. Of course, you know, for everybody knows it, and it is a public matter in all Seville, that no one dared to try it. His daughter herself would not, though she is a

professor of music herself. After her father's death she went into the convent as a novice. Her unwillingness to play was the most natural thing in the world; accustomed as she was to those marvellous performances, any other playing must have appeared bad to her, not to speak of her desire to avoid comparisons. But when the sisterhood had already decided that in honor of the dead organist, and as a token of respect to his memory, the organ should not be played to-night, here comes this fellow along, and says that he is ready to play it.

"Ignorance is the boldest of all things. It is true, the fault is not his, so much as theirs who have consented to this profanation, but that is the way of the world. But, I say, there's no small bit of people coming. Any one would say that nothing had changed since last year. The same distinguished persons, the same elegant costumes, the crowding at the door, the same excitement in the portico, the same throng in the church. Alas! if the dead man were to rise, he would feel like dying again to hear his organ played by inferior hands. The fact is, if what the

people of the neighborhood tell me is true, they are getting a fine reception ready for the intruder. When the time comes for him to touch the keys, there is going to break out a racket made by timbrels, drums, and horse-fiddles, so that you can't hear anything else. But hush! there's the hero of the occasion going into the church. Goodness! what gaudy clothes, what a neck-cloth, what a high and mighty air! Come, hurry up, the archbishop came only a moment ago, and the mass is going to begin. Come on; I guess this night will give us something to talk about for many a day!"

Saying this, the worthy woman, whom the reader recognizes by her abrupt talkativeness, went into the Church of Santa Inés, opening for herself a path, in her usual way, by shoving and elbowing through the crowd.

The ceremony had already begun. The church was as brilliant as the year before.

The new organist, after passing between the rows of the faithful in the nave, and going to kiss the archbishop's ring, had gone up to the organ-loft, where he was trying

one stop of the organ after another, with an affected and ridiculous gravity.

A low, confused noise was heard coming from the common people clustered at the rear of the church, a sure augury of the coming storm, which would not be long in breaking.

"He is a mere clown," said some, "who does not know how to do anything, not even look straight."

"He is an ignoramus," said others, "who, after having made a perfect rattle out of the organ in his own church, comes here to profane Maese Pérez's."

And while one was taking off his cloak so as to be ready to beat his drum to good advantage, and another was testing his timbrel, and all were more and more buzzing out in talk, only here and there could one be found to defend even feebly that curious person, whose proud and pedantic bearing so strongly contrasted with the modest appearance and kind affability of Maese Pérez.

At last the looked-for moment arrived, when the priest, after bowing low and murmuring the sacred words, took the host in

his hands. The bells gave forth a peal, like a rain of crystal notes; the transparent waves of incense rose, and the organ sounded.

But its first chord was drowned by a horrible clamor which filled the whole church. Bagpipes, horns, timbrels, drums, every instrument known to the populace, lifted up their discordant voices all at once.

The confusion and clangor lasted but a few seconds. As the noises began, so they ended, all together.

The second chord, full, bold, magnificent, sustained itself, pouring from the organ's metal tubes like a cascade of inexhaustible and sonorous harmony.

Celestial songs like those that caress the ear in moments of ecstasy; songs which the soul perceives, but which the lip cannot repeat; single notes of a distant melody, which sound at intervals, borne on the breeze; the rustle of leaves kissing each other on the trees with a murmur like rain; trills of larks which rise with quivering songs from among the flowers like a flight of arrows to the sky; nameless sounds, overwhelming as the roar of a tempest; fluttering hymns, which seemed

to be mounting to the throne of the Lord like a mixture of light and sound—all were expressed by the organ's hundred voices, with more vigor, more subtle poetry, more weird coloring, than had ever been known before.

. . . . . .

When the organist came down from the loft the crowd which pressed up to the stairway was so great, and their eagerness to see and greet him so intense, that the chief judge, fearing, and not without reason, that he would be suffocated among them all, ordered some of the officers to open a path for the organist, with their staves of office, so that he could reach the high altar, where the prelate was waiting for him.

"You perceive," said the archbishop, "that I have come all the way from my palace to hear you. Now, are you going to be as cruel as Maese Pérez? He would never save me the journey, by going to play the Christmas Eve mass in the cathedral."

"Next year," replied the organist, "I prom-

ise to give you the pleasure; since, for all the gold in the world, I would never play this organ again."

"But why not?" interrupted the prelate.

"Because," returned the organist, endeavoring to repress the agitation which revealed itself in the pallor of his face—"because it is so old and poor; one cannot express one's self on it satisfactorily."

The archbishop withdrew, followed by his attendants. One after another the litters of the great folk disappeared in the windings of the neighboring streets. The group in the portico scattered. The sexton was locking up the doors, when two women were perceived, who had stopped to cross themselves and mutter a prayer, and who were now going on their way into Dueñas Alley.

"What would you have, my dear Doña Baltasara?" one was saying. "That's the way I am. Every crazy person with his whim. The barefooted Capuchins might assure me that it was so, and I would not believe it. That man never played what we have heard. Why, I have heard him a thousand times in San Bartolomé, his parish

church; the priest had to send him away he was so poor a player. You felt like plugging your ears with cotton. Why, all you need is to look at his face, and that is the mirror of the soul, they say. I remember, as if I was seeing him now, poor man — I remember Maese Pérez's face, nights like this, when he came down from the organ-loft, after having entranced the audience with his splendors. What a gracious smile! What a happy glow on his face! Old as he was, he seemed like an angel. But this creature came plunging down as if a dog were barking at him on the landing, and all the color of a dead man, while his—come, dear Doña Baltasara, believe me, and believe what I say: there is some great mystery about this."

Thus conversing, the two women turned the corner of the alley, and disappeared. There is no need of saying who one of them was.

IV.

Another year had gone by. The abbess of the Convent of Santa Inés and Maese Pérez's daughter were talking in a low voice, half hidden in the shadows of the church choir. The penetrating voice of the bell was summoning the faithful. A very few people were passing through the portico, silent and deserted, this year, and after taking holy water at the door, were choosing seats in a corner of the nave, where a handful of residents of the neighborhood were quietly waiting for the Christmas Eve mass to begin.

"There, you see," the mother superior was saying, "your fear is entirely childish; there is no one in the church. All Seville is trooping to the cathedral to-night. Play the organ, and do it without any distrust whatever. We are only a sisterhood here. But why don't you speak? What has happened? What is the matter with you?"

"I am afraid," replied the girl, in a tone of the deepest agitation.

"Afraid! Of what?"

"I do not know—something supernatural. Listen to what happened last night. I had heard you say that you were anxious for me to play the organ for the mass. I was proud of the honor, and I thought I would arrange the stops and get the organ in good tune so as to give you a surprise to-day. Alone I went into the choir and opened the door leading to the organ-loft. The cathedral clock was striking just then, I do not know what hour; but the strokes of the bell were very mournful, and they were very numerous—going on sounding for a century, as it seemed to me, while I stood as if nailed to the threshold.

"The church was empty and dark. Far away there gleamed a feeble light, like a faint star in the sky; it was the lamp burning on the high altar. By its flickering light, which only helped to make the deep horror of the shadows the more intense, I saw—I saw—mother, do not disbelieve it—a man. In perfect silence, and with his

back turned towards me, he was running over the organ-keys with one hand while managing the stops with the other. And the organ sounded, but in an indescribable manner. It seemed as if each note were a sob smothered in the metal tube, which vibrated under the pressure of the air compressed within it, and gave forth a low, almost imperceptible tone, yet exact and true.

"The cathedral clock kept on striking, and that man kept on running over the keys. I could hear his very breathing.

"Fright had frozen the blood in my veins. My body was as cold as ice, except my head, and that was burning. I tried to cry out, but I could not. That man turned his face and looked at me—no, he did not look at me, for he was blind. It was my father!"

"Nonsense, sister! Banish these fancies with which the adversary endeavors to overturn weak imaginations. Address a *Paternoster* and an *Ave Maria* to the archangel, Saint Michael, the captain of the celestial hosts, that he may aid you in opposing evil spirits. Wear on your neck a scapulary

which has been pressed to the relics of Saint Pacomio, the counsellor against temptations, and go, go quickly, and sit at the organ. The mass is going to begin, and the faithful are growing impatient. Your father is in heaven, and thence, instead of giving you a fright, will descend to inspire his daughter in the solemn service."

The prioress went to occupy her seat in the choir in the midst of the sisterhood. Maese Pérez's daughter opened the door of the organ-loft with trembling hand, sat down at the organ, and the mass began.

The mass began, and went on without anything unusual happening until the time of consecration came. Then the organ sounded. At the same time came a scream from Maese Pérez's daughter.

The mother superior, the nuns, and some of the faithful rushed up to the organ-loft.

"Look at him!—look at him!" cried the girl, fixing her eyes, starting from their sockets, upon the seat, from which she had risen in terror. She was clinging with convulsed hands to the railing of the organ-loft.

Everybody looked intently at the spot

to which she directed her gaze. No one was at the organ, yet it went on sounding—sounding like the songs of the archangels in their bursts of mystic ecstasy.

. . . . . .

"Didn't I tell you a thousand times, if I did once, dear Doña Baltasara—didn't I tell you? There is some great mystery about this. What! didn't you go last night to the Christmas Eve mass? Well, you must know, anyhow, what happened. Nothing else is talked about in the whole city. The archbishop is furious, and no wonder. Not to have gone to Santa Inés, not to have been present at the miracle—and all to hear a wretched clatter! That's all the inspired organist of San Bartolomé made in the cathedral, so persons who heard him tell me. Yes, I said so all the time. The squint-eye never could have played that. It was all a lie. There is some great mystery here. What do I think it was? Why, it was the soul of Maese Pérez."

FIORACCIO.

BY

GIOVANNI MAGHERINI-GRAZIANI.

FIORACCIO.

EVERYBODY called him Fioraccio, but his real name was Antonio, and he kept a little shop for bread and macaroni just there by the bridge, where the tobacconist's is now. He was a little man, short and thick, always dressed in a striped jacket and low shoes which were never tied. He never wore a hat, summer or winter; and when the sun shone on his head, that was as bare as the back of your hand, it glittered like a brand-new tin kettle. He had yellow eyes like a cat's. He always seemed to be laughing in a sneering, scoffing fashion; and when he spoke he whistled, because he had lost his teeth; in front he had only two left, one on each side. If there ever was a rascal in this world, Fio-

raccio was one, and one of the first; and in his own place there was more talk of him than of Barabbas in the Passion of Our Lord. I don't mean to speak ill of him, all the same; he's dead now, and long since gone to his own place. As I said, Fioraccio had a shop where he sold bread, wine, and macaroni, and kept a sort of little inn. But the real shop was behind, where the door opened into the garden; there he kept a store of all sorts of things—wood, cloth, old iron, barrels, flasks, oil-jars, grain, wine, oil—for Fioraccio was a receiver of stolen goods; and whatever was stolen sooner or later found its way to him, and in all the years that he kept up this trade the police never once got a single chance to lay hands on him. They were after him, time and again, and hundreds of times his shop was searched, but to no purpose. When they came to look the goods were safely hidden, and Fioraccio never brought them to light until all danger was over. If he bought anything he never paid for it; nobody had ever seen the color of his money; he paid in oaths. If any one went to his shop they never got full weight.

There was a saying, "At Fioraccio's some get eight, and some get nine, but nobody gets ten." There were not the inspectors then as there are now. For that matter, in his shop nobody stopped to talk, nobody ever got the right change; and if anybody made any complaints, they got nothing but abuse. For this reason nobody who was in a hurry ever went to Fioraccio, and he troubled himself very little about his customers. "I don't care if they don't come," he said, "they only give trouble." For that shop, you see, was only the cover for the other one. But if there was anything worth while going on he was ready enough to put himself out, and often stayed up the whole night long. Otherwise, he sat the whole blessed day at the door of the shop, and had something spiteful to say to every one who passed; young or old, man or woman, married or unmarried, nobody escaped his tongue. He knew neither Easter nor Lent; one day was the same as another to him. If the holy sacrament passed by his door, he didn't even take the pipe out of his mouth or get off his stool—he smoked faster than ever, to show

his disrespect. He would hear nothing about Madonna or the saints; and if the priest asked him, as he was blessing the houses,

"Fioraccio, do you want the holy water?"

"I can give it myself," he would answer.

Hardly was his old father in his grave when he cleared all the pictures and crosses out of the house; and when the old woman who swept out his rooms asked him if he wasn't afraid of the judgment, he answered,

"I don't want my wall covered with rubbish."

If he'd been content with being wicked himself! But he was always making mischief, and putting other people up to evil doings. He didn't even respect innocence, and taught little boys to lie and steal. For example, a nephew of his own, about eleven years old, whom he took to live with him—he said to the boy every morning when he sent him out,

"Now mind you don't come home empty-handed to-night."

And if he brought nothing he would give him no supper, and even beat him sometimes.

"If you want your supper you must earn it," he told him.

Near the shop of Fioraccio there was one belonging to an old aunt of his, who was nearly blind. Fioraccio used to send the boy into this shop to rob the till; and as the boy was little, and there wasn't the paper money, as there is now, he used to tell him always to bring the white money, and to take it while the old woman was at the door, but not to take too much at a time or people would find it out. And when the boy brought scudi, or other silver money, Fioraccio would give him a sou or a toy.

But one day the boy was caught, and beaten worse than a donkey. To excuse himself he told the whole story, and how he had been taught to steal, and by whom. And Fioraccio, when he heard it, beat him worse than ever, and turned him out of the house. So Fioraccio remained alone—alone in the house, and alone in the shop; and at last nobody came into the shop any more, for they didn't like to be sworn at. "Some day the earth will open under his feet," they said. They called his shop "Inferno;" and

even now, if any one is heard to swear very hard, people say, "Holloa! has Fioraccio come to life?" For he had become a proverb, you know. And so he lived for many years; but at last his time came, like other people's. He began to look very old, and to get up late, and go to bed early. The shop would be open every other day; then open two days and shut three days. He grew to be a perfect skeleton, all skin and bones, and the *scaldino** was never out of his hands. Everybody said, "Ah! Fioraccio isn't long for this world." And he wasn't. The shop was always shut now. Sometimes he'd come to the window in the middle of the day, when it was fine, but he looked so dreadful it was enough to frighten one. It was old age was the matter with him, and for that there's no cure. At last he took to his bed; but instead of repenting and changing for the better, he went on worse and worse. He blasphemed like a fiend. The worse he was the worse he swore. At last

* An earthen pot with charcoal, to warm the hands and feet by.

the old woman, who was the only creature that went near him, told him that if he didn't stop swearing she wouldn't come any more.

"Why not?" asked Fioraccio.

"Because I'm afraid that some day the devil will come and carry us both off," said the old woman.

"Oh, the devil! and the devil! If there was one really, he'd have made me a visit long ago," said he.

The priest, when he heard how ill Fioraccio was, said to himself, "I must go to him; there's no help for it!"

And he went; but they say he made a fast that day, though it wasn't in the calendar. He knocked, and went up-stairs. When Fioraccio recognized the priest's voice, he said, "What does that fellow want with me? I won't see him."

"How? you won't see him!" said the old woman. "It seems to me it is only polite of him to make you a visit."

"Oh yes, I dare say, but I don't care for such politeness; priests are like owls, birds of ill omen. And—"

But the old woman had opened the door by this time, and beckoned to the priest to come in.

The priest entered the room.

"But I told you not to come in," howled Fioraccio.

"Good-morning, Antonio."

Fioraccio only growled.

"I heard you were ill, and—"

"It was something that they didn't say I was dead."

"And I thought I would come and see you." So he began to talk; but as soon as he tried to bring the talk round to the point he desired, Fioraccio always changed the subject. At last the priest grew desperate, and laying his hand on Fioraccio's shoulder:

"Fiore," he said, "you mustn't be angry if I speak seriously to you. You know that we haven't only the body to look after—"

"I know what you mean; but when I want to confess I'll send for you."

"But, of course, whenever you choose—"

"Pray don't trouble yourself—"

But the priest wouldn't be content without preaching a little; so he began to talk

of repentance, and restitution, and such things, you know. When Fioraccio heard the word "restitution" he flew into a rage, and called out:

"Did I ever rob you of anything?"

"I don't mean that; I mean—"

"Now, listen, Mr. Rector. You and I do very well as long as we are apart, but if we meet we disagree. So, if we're to have peace, you'd better not come here any more. Do you hear?" And he turned his back, and not another word would he say.

"How goes it?" asked the old woman.

"He won't hear of it. If those above don't take it up, I don't see what is to be done. To-morrow I'll come, at all events," said the priest.

"The Lord and Our Blessed Lady grant it." But before the next day Fioraccio suddenly grew worse, and before the priest could get to him he was dead.

This happened in 1837, and there are plenty of people living now that remember the whole story, and can tell it you better than I can. Scarcely was he dead when he turned black all over, so that it was a horror

to look at him. They rang the bell, carried him to church, and then into the church-yard, where they buried him.

The next morning, before day (it was hardly four o'clock), the priest was in bed, when he heard a knock at the door, and asked who was there, thinking some sick person wanted him.

"It's Cecco,"* said the servant.

"What Cecco?"

"Cecco from ——" (Fioraccio's place).

It was the sexton.

"What, in Heaven's name, does he want at this hour?"

"Wants to see your reverence."

"Send him in; let's see what it is."

Cecco appeared at the door, hat in hand.

"What's the matter now?"

"Something you'll hardly believe. Didn't your reverence bury Fioraccio yesterday?"

"Of course I did. What about it?"

"He's got up again."

"What?"

"He's got up again."

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* Frank.

"Impossible!"

"It's the case, all the same. I was passing by on my way to work in the field. When I was passing the burial-ground I turned round to look in, and there, just where we buried him, I saw something white. I thought I must be dreaming, and as by chance I had the key in my pocket, I went in to look. It was he—Lord keep us from lies!—but I turned short round, and came away without looking back."

"So you came here and waked me."

"Who else was I to come to? The strange thing is that the earth looks as if it hadn't been touched."

"Some one must have done it to play you a trick. You're sure the gate was locked?"

"Locked and bolted. And he wasn't very pleasant to go near, either."

"Did you bury him again?"

"Not I, indeed! And, besides, your reverence must come, for perhaps it isn't all quite natural. I mean—you know—"

"This morning I can't manage it; I have that affair at X——."

"You could come before that; the whole thing won't take more than an hour."

"No, no; mind what I tell you. Go and bury him again."

"But—"

"Only you put him deep enough, I'll promise you he won't come above-ground again."

The sexton turned his hat round and round. At last:

"Your reverence shall be obeyed," he said. "I'll go and get the tools." And he went out; but before he shut the chamber door the priest called him back.

"Say nothing about this, you know."

"Your reverence may depend upon me. I won't say anything. Well," said Cecco to himself, as he drew the door to after him, "at least I shall have lived to say I've buried the same man twice."

The next morning there he was again. The priest called out:

"What now?"

"Same old story."

"What story?"

"Fioraccio."

"Above ground again?"

"Just that."

"It doesn't seem possible."

"But it's so. If you don't believe me come and see for yourself."

"I do believe you, but what can I do? You must just bury him again. Some one must have—"

"If you saw the state he's in you wouldn't think anybody 'd be likely to want to meddle with him."

"I don't know. Sometimes—"

"Well, I'll bury him this time, and then we'll see."

That same day—I remember it as if it were yesterday—I was taking some tools to the smith to be mended, when I came upon Cecco coming away from the burial-ground with the spade in his hand.

"Been putting somebody to bed?" I asked.

"If you knew!" said he.

"What?"

"I've just buried Fioraccio."

"Only now. What did you keep him above-ground so long for? Wanted to be quite sure he was dead?"

"I've buried him over again — twice." And he tells me the whole story.

I wouldn't believe him, and I remember saying: "I'm sure somebody helps him to get above-ground."

"Somebody does, you may be sure, and it's easy to guess who."

"I know what you mean. Somebody who has no need of a spade. Look here," I went on. "Let's you and I come and watch here to-night, and see who comes. Are you afraid?"

"No!" he answered; "not with you. I wouldn't stay alone, though."

"Say nothing to anybody, and at nine o'clock to-night I'll come for you, and we'll see if I'm right."

That night at nine o'clock there I was.

"Shall we go?"

"Come along; but we'll take something in our hands, in case it should be anybody."

So we each took a thick stick, and started for the cemetery. It was an ugly black night, promising rain. Outside we couldn't stay; we should have been seen.

"Where can we go?"

"Let's go in."

Cecco opened the gate, and we went in; but we could not shut the gate when we were inside.

"Leave it ajar," said I, "if any one comes it won't be by the gate, but over the wall."

"But here we shall be seen."

"Where's he buried?"

"There, by the dead-house."

"Let's go in there, then."

"In the dead-house?"

"Where else? There's no other place."

There was a bench, and we sat down. I began to light my pipe.

"What are you doing?" asked Cecco; "if they see the light they'll know there's some one here."

"Oh yes, as if I was going to stay here all night without even smoking; I should go to sleep."

We said very little more; neither he nor I had any wish to talk. We heard nothing but the bats, which kept flying in and out; now and then a dog barked.

The clock struck eleven. I thought I heard steps on the road, but they passed by.

"It's Faustino," said Cecco. "I know his whistle"—for he had begun to whistle as he passed the gate, as people do when they feel a little timid. About half an hour later an owl flew close by my face, and gave me a great start; but she was afraid of us, and flew off, and we heard her hoot outside.

"It must be nearly midnight."

"We might go now. Nothing is likely to happen to-night," said I.

"Wait till the clock strikes."

"Very well, we'll wait."

"Listen, there's the clock. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven—twelve."

I felt him catch me by the arm.

"Look, look there!"

There, where Fioraccio was buried, the earth began to heave and roll, rising slowly, slowly, as if it were pushed up from below, and we saw him rise out of it upright, he remained so for a moment, and then fell at full length on the grave. Cecco said not a word, but strode off across the cemetery and went out, and I after him. I wanted to turn back and look if it were really he,

but I hadn't the courage; I passed close by him, but I didn't look. I tell it you as it happened. Cecco was trembling from head to foot; I knew by his voice.

"Did you see?" he said.

"I saw it. Won't you shut the gate?"

"I won't touch anything. The rector must come to-morrow and see for himself—he wouldn't believe me. I'll go straight to him now, and you must go with me."

"But we can't go at this hour," said I; "to-morrow morning early, rather. I'll go home with you to sleep. I told them at home that I should be out all night."

In the morning early we went to the priest, and told him all that happened.

"And what are we to do?" he asked.

"If your reverence doesn't know who should?" asked Cecco.

"If you tried—"

"Tried what? Burying him again? You see it's of no use."

"Certainly it is no use," said I; "in holy ground he won't stay, that's quite plain—such a rascal as he was."

"Hush!" said the priest. "Don't tell

any one of this—I lay it on your consciences; and, besides, we have no right to judge the dead. You, Cecco, go and put him once more underground."

"Your reverence may command me in everything, but, saving your presence, I can't and I won't go back to the cemetery again; here's the key, but go I won't—that's flat."

"Never mind, I'll send some one with you, if you're frightened. And you (to me) go to the convent of ——, with a note for the father superior."

In fact he wrote a note, and I took it to the convent. The superior read it, and said to me: "I understand; tell the rector that everything shall be done as he asks."

I took back the answer to the priest.

"Have you got him underground?" I asked.

"Yes, but I thought we never should manage it, I assure you."

"Do you want anything more of me?"

"Not now; to-night, perhaps. If I want you I'll send for you."

"You will find me at home; I'll come directly."

All the while I was at work I was wondering what the priest could want of me, but I thought it must have something to do with Fioraccio. Just after sunset the priest's nephew came to tell me I was to go to the parsonage. I went, and found there two Capuchin friars, who had come to exorcise Fioraccio. The priest wanted me to come with him.

"When?" I asked.

"To-night."

"Then I must go and tell my wife."

"What in the world are you doing always out at night?" asked she.

I told her some story or other, and after supper I went off to the priest. He would have it that I should sup again with him. The friars would neither eat nor drink, and we heard them praying aloud in the next room, and reciting the office. Just before midnight one of the friars put his head in at the door and said:

"It is time now. Let us go."

The priest turned pale, but he was forced to make a virtue of necessity and to come with us. We took a lantern, and went out

of the house by the garden-door. There were five of us—the priest, the two friars, Cecco, and I, all as silent as the grave; in the dark, that way, we seemed like conspirators. I was in front with the Capuchins; Cecco and the priest came behind. When we came to the gate I lit the lantern; plenty of trouble it gave me, too; I thought it would never light, but at last I found a match that would kindle. The priest was the first to enter the cemetery.

"What did I tell you?" whispered Cecco; "there he is again!"

I was in front. The light fell full on the face of Fioraccio. But why do I call it a face? It was black as charcoal, with open mouth and those two yellow teeth, and the yellow eyes wide open, shining in the darkness. I turned sick and stopped short.

"Heavens! how ugly he is!" I cried.

"Hush!" said the friar who was nearest me.

Then they put on their stoles, opened their books, sprinkled the dead with holy water, and recited the service of exorcism. I held the light, the priest clung to my sleeve,

and I felt him tremble; indeed, from time to time, he gave such convulsive starts that the lantern shook in my hand, and the friars could not see to read. "Antonio! Antonio!" called out the friar, "Antonio! answer, in God's name."

Not a word did he say.

"Try calling him Fioraccio; perhaps he won't answer to his Christian name." This I whispered into the friar's ear.

The Capuchin sprinkled the corpse once more with holy water, then began calling, "Fioraccio, answer, answer!"

There came a deep voice, hollow-sounding, and far away, as if from fathoms underground.

"Who calls me? What do you want?"

It was the devil, who answered for him.

"Why do you not stay where you have been laid. What is the reason you do not rest?"

"Because I cannot."

"Why can you not rest?"

"Because—" And he began to tell us why. Such things! such things! that he had done in life. The priest put it all un-

der the seal of confession with us afterwards. He said "that he was damned body and soul." And saying this, he swore a fearful oath. And then he said:

"Take me away from here."

"Where do you want to go?"

"To the Arno. Under water twenty braccios* deep. There, where I can hear no bells."

"You shall have three braccios."

We heard another oath, always in that voice underground, for Fioraccio's mouth never stirred. And the friars sprinkled him again with holy water.

"For the last time; how much water must you have?"

"Five braccios."

"You shall have three, and no more."

He went on swearing. At last he said:

"Well, if I must I must, but not in too much of a hurry."

And at that moment we saw something, dressed all in red, fly up over the wall.

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* Braccio, a measure used formerly in central Italy—a little more than half a metre long.

"We must come back to-morrow," said the friar. "God have us all in his holy keeping!"

We left the cemetery; you should have seen the priest how he trembled. The next day he sent for me and told me: "We must take him away to-night, and you must make a coffin for him."

"But I never made a coffin in my life."

"You can manage it somehow. You can generally get to the end of what you undertake. And it needn't be such a fine piece of work, you know, so long as it holds together."

"Well," said I, "I'll do my best." I went home, and looked up some chestnut planks I had, and made the coffin. Then I went to the parsonage, where I found the Capuchin friars and the priest talking together.

"The coffin is done," I said. "Shall I bring it here?"

"What are you thinking of? To-night, after dark, you must take it to the cemetery and put him into it; you can call Cecco, if he will go with—you, in short, do the best you can; only get him into the

coffin. Then he must be carried — somehow—"

"I understand," said I; "I am to look after the whole business. Very well, I'll see what I can do. Cecco wouldn't hear of carrying him; we had better ask some of the Brotherhood."

"No; because we must keep it as quiet as we can."

"As quiet as you like. But it is a long way to the Arno, and that coffin is made of chestnut. It is heavy, I can tell you."

"Can't you find a cart?"

It was settled that I should borrow my cousin's cart, and the priest should find some more men. Then I went for Cecco, who made no end of difficulty about coming, and after dark we carried the coffin to the cemetery. There he was again, uglier than ever. One could see that he was damned only to look at him.

"Here, Cecco," said I, "help me to lift him." I turned round. No Cecco. I ran out of the gate, and found him in the road.

"Look here," said he, "if you can't manage it by yourself, you must get some-

body else, for you've seen the last of me in there."

I went back. I had a great mind to run away, too, but I had promised his reverence, and, besides, it wouldn't have done to make a scandal. So I set the coffin on its side, and rolled him into it. B'essed Virgin! it almost made me faint away. Then I had nothing better to do than to turn round and look at him. It was the light, perhaps, but he looked just as if he was grinning as he used to when he was alive. I threw the cover on, anyhow, and bolted—I must say I bolted—as hard as I could go. The priest told me to harness the cart towards ten o'clock at night, when there would be no one about, and bring it to the cemetery. I found waiting for me at the gate the priest, the two friars, Cecco, a brother of Cecco's, and three others whom the priest had sent for. We took up the coffin in silence, and put it in the cart; then I took the donkey by the bridle, and we set off. It was a dark, close night, when one could hardly breathe or see where one was going, though we had two lanterns. What we went through on that

road God only knows—now we were on this side of the road, now on that, now among the trees, never ten paces straight ahead; and the poor donkey tugged and tugged, as if the coffin had been made of lead. Every minute one or the other of the lanterns went out. From time to time we passed through a thick fog, so thick that we lost sight of each other, of the east, of everything. The friars went on muttering prayers and sprinkling holy water, and we recommended ourselves to God and to the Madonna. Even I lost courage altogether. As for the poor priest, we had to leave him at a farm-house on the road, for he could go no farther. But that was nothing to what followed. Just as we passed the turning at the mill of —— a hurricane burst over us that uprooted trees, carried off hay-stacks, tiles off the roofs, all sorts of things. We were surrounded by a cloud of leaves, twigs, straw, and dust. I never remember such a whirlwind. Two hay-stacks flew off into the air as if they had been locks of tow; a big pine-tree that two men couldn't clasp round went rolling over the plain like

a twig; and along the banks of the Arno oaks uprooted, willows twisted together like yarn. Nothing to be seen of the cart or of the beast—nothing; we could not tell which way they had gone. We commended our souls to Heaven, and went on. I don't know how we found our way to the bank of the Arno, just there where it is deepest. We could hardly recognize the place. We found the donkey standing there, quite still.

"Here," said the friar.

"No," said the same voice we had heard in the cemetery. "More water—more water!" And then oaths, to make one's hair stand on end with fright.

"No; there's enough here."

Then more oaths, and more oaths.

"Here," said the friar, "I command you, in the name of God!"

All of a sudden there was a great rush and sputter of flame, as if one had thrown sulphur on a fire, and we saw a figure like a galley-slave, all in red, and heard a splash and a gurgle, and when we looked at the cart it was empty. I went home, put the beast in the stall, and turned to go to the house.

"Who's that?" cried my wife. "Wait; I'll get up."

I didn't answer; it didn't seem as if it was me she was speaking to.

"Will you have something to eat?" she said. "You had no supper yesterday. I'll make a fire and cook this bit of beef; it will only take a minute." So saying, she began to kindle the fire.

I looked on while my wife put a fagot on the coals, which began to sputter and send out sparks, and I said, without thinking,

"Just like him."

"Just like *who?*" said she.

I perceived that I had said too much, and wanted not to say anything more; but it was of no use, she had it all out of me. I tried to eat, but couldn't swallow a mouthful. I went to bed. When I was nearly asleep I heard the house door open. I listened, and heard a noise as if the kettle and the bucket were rolling over the floor.

"There's somebody there," said my wife.

"Hush," said I, "I hear them," for the noise began again.

"Get up; there's some one there."

I got up and went into the kitchen. Nobody there—the bucket and the kettle each in its place, the door shut and bolted. I went back to bed, but couldn't close an eye until morning. The noise kept on all night in the kitchen. The next morning, when I went out, I met the old woman who had taken care of Fioraccio. She stopped me and asked me about what had happened in the night, of which she had heard something. When I told her about the noise in the kitchen, she said: "'At that same hour I could not sleep, and I took up my rosary meaning to say it for him. Hardly had I begun when I saw him appear, all dressed in red, and he said to me:

"'No need to say it for me; it's of no use. I'm damned—damned for all eternity.'"

THE SILENT WOMAN.

BY

LEOPOLD KOMPERT.

THE SILENT WOMAN.

THE uproarious merriment of a wedding-feast burst forth into the night from a brilliantly lighted house in the "gasse" (narrow street). It was one of those nights touched with the warmth of spring, but dark and full of soft mist. Most fitting it was for a celebration of the union of two yearning hearts to share the same lot, a lot that may possibly dawn in sunny brightness, but also become clouded and sullen—for a long, long time! But how merry and joyous they were over there, those people of the happy olden times! They, like us, had their troubles and trials, and when misfortune visited them it came not to them with soft cushions and tender pressures of the hand. Rough and hard,

with clinched fist, it laid hold upon them. But when they gave vent to their happy feelings and sought to enjoy themselves, they were like swimmers in cooling waters. They struck out into the stream with freshness and courage, suffered themselves to be borne along by the current whithersoever it took its course. This was the cause of such a jubilee, such a thoughtlessly noisy outburst of all kinds of soul-possessing gayety from this house of nuptials.

"And if I had known," the bride's father, the rich Ruben Klattaner, had just said, "that it would take the last gulden in my pocket, then out it would have come."

In fact, it did appear as if the last groschen had really taken flight, and was fluttering about in the form of platters heaped up with geese and pastry-tarts. Since two o'clock—that is, since the marriage ceremony had been performed out in the open street—until nearly midnight, the wedding-feast had been progressing, and even yet the *sarvers*, or waiters, were hurrying from room to room. It was as if a twofold blessing had descended upon all this abundance of food and

drink, for, in the first place, they did not seem to diminish; secondly, they ever found a new place for disposal. To be sure, this appetite was sharpened by the presence of a little dwarf-like, unimportant-looking man. He was esteemed, however, none the less highly by every one. They had specially written to engage the celebrated "Leb Narr," of Prague. And when was ever a mood so out of sorts, a heart so imbittered as not to thaw out and laugh if Leb Narr played one of his pranks. Ah, thou art now dead, good fool! Thy lips, once always ready with a witty reply, are closed! Thy mouth, then never still, now speaks no more! But when the hearty peals of laughter once rang forth at thy command, intercessors, as it were, in thy behalf before the very throne of God, thou hadst nothing to fear. And the joy of that "other" world was thine, that joy that has ever belonged to the most pious of country rabbis!"

In the mean time the young people had assembled in one of the rooms to dance. It was strange how the sound of violins and trumpets accorded with the drolleries of the

wit from Prague. In one part the outbursts of merriment were so boisterous that the very candles on the little table seemed to flicker with terror; in another an ordinary conversation was in progress, which now and then only ran over into a loud tittering, when some old lady slipped into the circle and tried her skill at a redowa, then altogether unknown to the young people. In the very midst of the tangle of dancers was to be seen the bride in a heavy silk wedding-gown. The point of her golden hood hung far down over her face. She danced continuously. She danced with every one that asked her. Had one, however, observed the actions of the young woman, they would certainly have seemed to him hurried, agitated, almost wild. She looked no one in the eye, not even her own bridegroom. He stood for the most part in the door-way, and evidently took more pleasure in the witticisms of the fool than in the dance or the lady dancers. But who ever thought for a moment why the young woman's hand burned, why her breath was so hot when one came near to her lips? Who should have noticed

so strange a thing? A low whispering already passed through the company, a stealthy smile stole across many a lip. A bevy of ladies was seen to enter the room suddenly. The music dashed off into one of its loudest pieces, and, as if by enchantment, the newly made bride disappeared behind the ladies. The bridegroom, with his stupid, smiling mien, was still left standing on the threshold. But it was not long before he too vanished. One could hardly say how it happened. But people understand such skilful movements by experience, and will continue to understand them as long as there are brides and grooms in the world.

This disappearance of the chief personages, little as it seemed to be noticed, gave, however, the signal for general leave-taking. The dancing became drowsy; it stopped all at once, as if by appointment. That noisy confusion now began which always attends so merry a wedding-party. Half-drunken voices could be heard still intermingled with a last, hearty laugh over a joke of the fool from Prague echoing across the table. Here and there some one, not quite sure of his

balance, was fumbling for the arm of his chair or the edge of the table. This resulted in his overturning a dish that had been forgotten, or in spilling a beer-glass. While this, in turn, set up a new hubbub, some one else, in his eagerness to betake himself from the scene, fell flat into the very débris. But all this tumult was really hushed the moment they all pressed to the door, for at that very instant shrieks, cries of pain, were heard issuing from the entrance below. In an instant the entire outpouring crowd with all possible force pushed back into the room, but it was a long time before the stream was pressed back again. Meanwhile, painful cries were again heard from below, so painful, indeed, that they restored even the most drunken to a state of consciousness.

"By the living God!" they cried to each other, "what is the matter down there? Is the house on fire?"

"She is gone! she is gone!" shrieked a woman's voice from the entry below.

"Who? who?" groaned the wedding-guests, seized, as it were, with an icy horror.

"Gone! gone!" cried the woman from

the entry, and hurrying up the stairs came Selde Klattaner, the mother of the bride, pale as death, her eyes dilated with most awful fright, convulsively grasping a candle in her hand. "For God's sake, what has happened?" was heard on every side of her.

The sight of so many people about her, and the confusion of voices, seemed to release the poor woman from a kind of stupor. She glanced shyly about her then, as if overcome with a sense of shame stronger than her terror, and said, in a suppressed tone:

"Nothing, nothing, good people. In God's name, I ask, what was there to happen?"

Dissimulation, however, was too evident to suffice to deceive them.

"Why, then, did you shriek so, Selde," called out one of the guests to her, "if nothing happened?"

"Yes, she has gone," Selde now moaned in heart-rending tones, "and she has certainly done herself some harm!"

The cause of this strange scene was now first discovered. The bride has disappeared

from the wedding-feast. Soon after that she had vanished in such a mysterious way, the bridegroom went below to the dimly-lighted room to find her, but in vain. At first thought this seemed to him to be a sort of bashful jest; but not finding her here, a mysterious foreboding seized him. He called to the mother of the bride:

"Woe to me! This woman has gone!"

Presently this party, that had so admirably controlled itself, was again thrown into commotion. "There was nothing to do," was said on all sides, "but to ransack every nook and corner. Remarkable instances of such disappearances of brides had been known. Evil spirits were wont to lurk about such nights and to inflict mankind with all sorts of sorceries." Strange as this explanation may seem, there were many who believed it at this very moment, and, most of all, Selde Klattaner herself. But it was only for a moment, for she at once exclaimed:

"No, no, my good people, she is gone; I know she is gone!"

Now for the first time many of them, especially the mothers, felt particularly un-

easy, and anxiously called their daughters to them. Only a few showed courage, and urged that they must search and search, even if they had to turn aside the river Iser a hundred times. They urgently pressed on, called for torches and lanterns, and started forth. The cowardly ran after them up and down the stairs. Before any one perceived it the room was entirely forsaken.

Ruben Klattaner stood in the hall entry below, and let the people hurry past him without exchanging a word with any. Bitter disappointment and fear had almost crazed him. One of the last to stay in the room above with Selde was, strange to say, Leb Narr, of Prague. After all had departed, he approached the miserable mother, and, in a tone least becoming his general manner, inquired:

"Tell me, now, Mrs. Selde, did she not wish to have 'him'?"

"Whom? whom?" cried Selde, with renewed alarm, when she found herself alone with the fool.

"I mean," said Leb, in a most sympathetic manner, approaching still nearer to Selde,

"that maybe you had to make your daughter marry him."

"Make? And have we, then, made her?" moaned Selde, staring at the fool with a look of uncertainty.

"Then nobody needs to search for her," replied the fool, with a sympathetic laugh, at the same time retreating. "It's better to leave her where she is."

Without saying thanks or good-night, he was gone.

Meanwhile the cause of all this disturbance had arrived at the end of her flight.

Close by the synagogue was situated the house of the rabbi. It was built in an angle of a very narrow street, set in a framework of tall shade-trees. Even by daylight it was dismal enough. At night it was almost impossible for a timid person to approach it, for people declared that the low supplications of the dead could be heard in the dingy house of God when at night they took the rolls of the law from the ark to summon their members by name.

Through this retired street passed, or rather ran, at this hour a shy form. Arriving at

the dwelling of the rabbi, she glanced backward to see whether any one was following her. But all was silent and gloomy enough about her. A pale light issued from one of the windows of the synagogue; it came from the "eternal lamp" hanging in front of the ark of the covenant. But at this moment it seemed to her as if a supernatural eye was gazing upon her. Thoroughly affrighted, she seized the little iron knocker of the door and struck it gently. But the throb of her beating heart was even louder, more violent, than this blow. After a pause, footsteps were heard passing slowly along the hall-way.

The rabbi had not occupied this lonely house a long time. His predecessor, almost a centenarian in years, had been laid to rest a few months before. The new rabbi had been called from a distant part of the country. He was unmarried, and in the prime of life. No one had known him before his coming. But his personal nobility and the profundity of his scholarship made up for his deficiency in years. An aged mother had accompanied him from their distant home, and she took the place of wife and child.

"Who is there?" asked the rabbi, who had been busy at his desk even at this late hour and thus had not missed hearing the knocker.

"It is I," the figure without responded, almost inaudibly.

"Speak louder, if you wish me to hear you," replied the rabbi.

"It is I, Ruben Klattaner's daughter," she repeated.

The name seemed to sound strange to the rabbi. He as yet knew too few of his congregation to understand that this very day he performed the marriage ceremony of the person who had just repeated her name. Therefore he called out, after a moment's pause, "What do you wish so late at night?"

"Open the door, rabbi," she answered, pleadingly, "or I shall die at once!"

The bolt was pushed back. Something gleaming, rustling, glided past the rabbi into the dusky hall. The light of the candle in his hand was not sufficient to allow him to descry it. Before he had time to address her, she had vanished past him and had disappeared through the open door into the

room. Shaking his head, the rabbi again bolted the door.

On re-entering the room he saw a woman's form sitting in the chair which he usually occupied. She had her back turned to him. Her head was bent low over her breast. Her golden wedding-hood, with its shading lace, was pulled down over her forehead. Courageous and pious as the rabbi was, he could not rid himself of a feeling of terror.

"Who are you?" he demanded, in a loud tone, as if its sound alone would banish the presence of this being that seemed to him at this moment to be the production of all the enchantments of evil spirits.

She raised herself, and cried in a voice that seemed to come from the agony of a human being:

"Do you not know me — me, whom you married a few hours since under the *chuppe* (marriage-canopy) to a husband?"

On hearing this familiar voice the rabbi stood speechless. He gazed at the young woman. Now, indeed, he must regard her as one bereft of reason, rather than as a spectre.

"Well, if you are she," he stammered out,

after a pause, for it was with difficulty that he found words to answer, "why are you here and not in the place where you belong?"

"I know no other place to which I belong more than here where I now am!" she answered, severely.

These words puzzled the rabbi still more. Is it really an insane woman before him? He must have thought so, for he now addressed her in a gentle tone of voice, as we do those suffering from this kind of sickness, in order not to excite her, and said:

"The place where you belong, my daughter, is in the house of your parents, and, since you have to-day been made a wife, your place is in your husband's house."

The young woman muttered something which failed to reach the rabbi's ear. Yet he only continued to think that he saw before him some poor unfortunate whose mind was deranged. After a pause, he added, in a still gentler tone: "What is your name, then, my child?"

"God, god," she moaned, in the greatest anguish, "he does not even yet know my name!"

"How should I know you," he continued, apologetically, "for I am a stranger in this place?"

This tender remark seemed to have produced the desired effect upon her excited mind.

"My name is Veile," she said, quietly, after a pause.

The rabbi quickly perceived that he had adopted the right tone towards his mysterious guest.

"Veile," he said, approaching nearer her, "what do you wish of me?"

"Rabbi, I have a great sin resting heavily upon my heart," she replied despondently. "I do not know what to do."

"What can you have done," inquired the rabbi, with a tender look, "that cannot be discussed at any other time than just now? Will you let me advise you, Veile?"

"No, no," she cried again, violently, "I will not be advised. I see, I know what oppresses me. Yes, I can grasp it by the hand, it lies so near before me. Is that what you call to be advised?"

"Very well," returned the rabbi, seeing

that this was the very way to get the young woman to talk—"very well, I say, you are not imagining anything. I believe that you have greatly sinned. Have you come here then to confess this sin? Do your parents or your husband know anything about it?"

"Who is my husband?" she interrupted him, impetuously.

Thoughts welled up in the rabbi's heart like a tumultuous sea in which opposing conjectures cross and recross each other's course. Should he speak with her as with an ordinary sinner?

"Were you, perhaps, forced to be married?" he inquired, as quietly as possible, after a pause.

A suppressed sob, a strong inward struggle, manifesting itself in the whole trembling body, was the only answer to this question.

"Tell me, my child," said the rabbi, encouragingly.

In such tones as the rabbi had never before heard, so strange, so surpassing any human sounds, the young woman began:

"Yes, rabbi, I will speak, even though I know that I shall never go from this place

alive, which would be the very best thing for me! No, rabbi, I was not forced to be married. My parents have never once said to me 'you must,' but my own will, my own desire, rather, has always been supreme. My husband is the son of a rich man in the community. To enter his family was to be made the first lady in the *gasse*, to sit buried in gold and silver. And that very thing, nothing else, was what infatuated me with him. It was for that that I forced myself, my heart and will, to be married to him, hard as it was for me. But in my innermost heart I detested him. The more he loved me, the more I hated him. But the gold and silver had an influence over me. More and more they cried to me, 'You will be the first lady in the *gasse!*'"

"Continue," said the rabbi, when she ceased, almost exhausted by these words.

"What more shall I tell you, rabbi?" she began again. "I was never a liar, when a child, or older, and yet during my whole engagement it has seemed to me as if a big, gigantic lie had followed me step by step. I have seen it on every side of me. But to-

day, when I stood under the *chuppe*, rabbi, and he took the ring from his finger and put it on mine, and when I had to dance at my own wedding with him, whom I now recognized, now for the first time, as the lie, and —when they led me away—"

This sincere confession escaping from the lips of the young woman, she sobbed aloud and bowed her head still deeper over her breast. The rabbi gazed upon her in silence. No insane woman ever spoke like that! Only a soul conscious of its own sin, but captivated by a mysterious power, could suffer like this!

It was not sympathy which he felt with her; it was much more a living over the sufferings of the woman. In spite of the confused story, it was all clear to the rabbi. The cause of the flight from the father's house at this hour also required no explanation. "I know what you mean," he longed to say, but he could only find words to say: "Speak further, Veile!"

The young woman turned towards him. He had not yet seen her face. The golden hood with the shading lace hung deeply over it.

"Have I not told you everything?" she said, with a flush of scorn.

"Everything?" repeated the rabbi, inquiringly. He only said this, moreover, through embarrassment.

"Do you tell me now," she cried, at once passionately and mildly, "what am I to do?"

"Veile!" exclaimed the rabbi, entertaining now, for the first time, a feeling of repugnance for this confidential interview.

"Tell me now!" she pleaded; and before the rabbi could prevent it the young woman threw herself down at his feet and clasped his knees in her arms. This hasty act had loosened the golden wedding-hood from her head, and thus exposed her face to view, a face of remarkable beauty.

So overcome was the young rabbi by the sight of it that he had to shade his eyes with his hands, as if before a sudden flash of lightning.

"Tell me now, what shall I do?" she cried again. "Do you think that I have come from my parents' home merely to return again without help? You alone in the world must tell me. Look at me! I have kept

all my hair just as God gave it me. It has never been touched by the shears. Should I, then, do anything to please my husband? I am no wife. I will not be a wife! Tell me, tell me, what am I to do?"

"Arise, arise," bade the rabbi; but his voice quivered, sounded almost painful.

"Tell me first," she gasped; "I will not rise till then!"

"How can I tell you?" he moaned, almost inaudibly.

"Naphtali!" shrieked the kneeling woman.

But the rabbi staggered backward. The room seemed ablaze before him, like a bright fire. A sharp cry rang from his breast, as if one suffering from some painful wound had been seized by a rough hand. In his hurried attempt to free himself from the embrace of the young woman, who still clung to his knees, it chanced that her head struck heavily against the floor.

"Naphtali!" she cried once again.

"Silence, silence," groaned the rabbi, pressing both hands against his head.

And still again she called out this name, but not with that agonizing cry. It sounded

rather like a commingling of exultation and lamentation.

And again he demanded, "Silence! silence!" but this time so imperiously, so forcibly, that the young woman lay on the floor as if conjured, not daring to utter a single word.

The rabbi paced almost wildly up and down the room. There must have been a hard, terrible struggle in his breast. It seemed to the one lying on the floor that she heard him sigh from the depths of his soul. Then his pacing became calmer; but it did not last long. The fierce conflict again assailed him. His step grew hurried; it echoed loudly through the awful stillness of the room. Suddenly he neared the young woman, who seemed to lie there scarcely breathing. He stopped in front of her. Had any one seen the face of the rabbi at this moment the expression on it would have filled him with terror. There was a marvellous tranquillity overlying it, the tranquillity of a struggle for life or death.

"Listen to me now, Veile," he began, slowly, "I will talk with you."

"I listen, rabbi," she whispered.

"But do you hear me well?"

"Only speak," she returned.

"But will you do what I advise you? Will you not oppose it? For I am going to say something that will terrify you?"

"I will do anything that you say. Only tell me," she moaned.

"Will you swear?"

"I will," she groaned.

"No, do not swear yet, until you have heard me," he cried. "I will not force you."

This time came no answer.

"Hear me, then, daughter of Ruben Klattaner," he began, after a pause. "You have a twofold sin upon your soul, and each is so great, so criminal, that it can only be forgiven by severe punishment. First you permitted yourself to be infatuated by the gold and silver, and then you forced your heart to lie. With the lie you sought to deceive the man, even though he had intrusted you with his all when he made you his wife. A lie is truly a great sin! Streams of water cannot drown them. They make men false

and hateful to themselves. The worst that has been committed in the world was led in by a lie. That is the one sin."

"I know, I know," sobbed the young woman.

"Now hear me further," began the rabbi again, with a wavering voice, after a short pause. "You have committed a still greater sin than the first. You have not only deceived your husband, but you have also destroyed the happiness of another person. You could have spoken, and you did not. For life you have robbed him of his happiness, his light, his joy, but you did not speak. What can he now do, when he knows what has been lost to him?"

"Naphtali!" cried the young woman.

"Silence! silence! do not let that name pass your lips again," he demanded, violently. "The more you repeat it the greater becomes your sin. Why did you not speak when you could have spoken? God can never easily forgive you that. To be silent, to keep secret in one's breast what would have made another man happier than the mightiest monarch! Thereby you have

made him more than unhappy. He will nevermore have the desire to be happy. Veile, God in heaven cannot forgive you for that."

"Silence! silence!" groaned the wretched woman.

"No, Veile," he continued, with a stronger voice, "let me talk now. You are certainly willing to hear me speak? Listen to me. You must do severe penance for this sin, the twofold sin which rests upon your head. God is long-suffering and merciful. He will perhaps look down upon your misery, and will blot out your guilt from the great book of transgressions. But you must become penitent. Hear, now, what it shall be."

The rabbi paused. He was on the point of saying the severest thing that had ever passed his lips.

"You were silent, Veile," then he cried, "when you should have spoken. Be silent now forever to all men and to yourself. From the moment you leave this house, until I grant it, you must be dumb; you dare not let a loud word pass from your mouth. Will you undergo this penance?"

"I will do all you say," moaned the young woman.

"Will you have strength to do it?" he asked, gently.

"I shall be as silent as death," she replied.

"And one thing more I have to say to you," he continued. "You are the wife of your husband. Return home and be a Jewish wife."

"I understand you," she sobbed in reply.

"Go to your home now, and bring peace to your parents and husband. The time will come when you may speak, when your sin will be forgiven you. Till then bear what has been laid upon you."

"May I say one thing more?" she cried, lifting up her head.

"Speak," he said.

"Naphtali!"

The rabbi covered his eyes with one hand, with the other motioned her to be silent. But she grasped his hand, drew it to her lips. Hot tears fell upon it.

"Go now," he sobbed, completely broken down.

She let go the hand. The rabbi had seized the candle, but she had already passed him, and glided through the dark hall. The door was left open. The rabbi locked it again.

. . . . . .

Veile returned to her home, as she had escaped, unnoticed. The narrow street was deserted, as desolate as death. The searchers were to be found everywhere except there where they ought first to have sought for the missing one. Her mother, Selde, still sat on the same chair on which she had sunk down an hour ago. The fright had left her like one paralyzed, and she was unable to rise. What a wonderful contrast this wedding-room, with the mother sitting alone in it, presented to the hilarity reigning here shortly before! On Veile's entrance her mother did not cry out. She had no strength to do so. She merely said: "So you have come at last, my daughter?" as if Veile had only returned from a walk somewhat too long. But the young woman did not answer to this and similar questions. Finally she signified by gesticula-

tions that she could not speak. Fright seized the wretched mother a second time, and the entire house was filled with her lamentations.

Ruben Klattaner and Veile's husband having now returned from their fruitless search, were horrified on perceiving the change which Veile had undergone. Being men, they did not weep. With staring eyes they gazed upon the silent young woman, and beheld in her an apparition which had been dealt with by God's visitation in a mysterious manner.

From this hour began the terrible penance of the young woman.

The impression which Veile's woful condition made upon the people of the *gasse* was wonderful. Those who had danced with her that evening of the wedding now first recalled her excited state. Her wild actions were now first remembered by many. It must have been an "evil eye," they concluded — a jealous, evil eye, to which her beauty was hateful. This alone could have possessed her with a demon of unrest. She was driven by this evil power into the dark

night, a sport of these malicious potencies which pursue men step by step, especially on such occasions. The living God alone knows what she must have seen that night. Nothing good, else one would not become dumb. Old legends and tales were revived, each more horrible than the other. Hundreds of instances were given to prove that this was nothing new in the *gasse*. Despite this explanation, it is remarkable that the people did not believe that the young woman was dumb. The most thought that her power of speech had been paralyzed by some awful fright, but that with time it would be restored. Under this supposition they called her "Veile the Silent."

There is a kind of human eloquence more telling, more forcible than the loudest words, than the choicest diction — the silence of woman! Ofttimes they cannot endure the slightest vexation, but some great, heart-breaking sorrow, some pain from constant renunciation, self-sacrifice, they suffer with sealed lips—as if, in very truth, they were bound with bars of iron.

It would be difficult to fully describe that

long "silent" life of the young woman. It is almost impossible to cite more than one incident. Veile accompanied her husband to his home, that house resplendent with that gold and silver which had infatuated her. She was, to be sure, the "first" woman in the *gasse;* she had everything in abundance. Indeed, the world supposed that she had but little cause for complaint. "Must one have everything?" was sometimes queried in the *gasse.* "One has one thing; another, another." And, according to all appearances, the people were right. Veile continued to be the beautiful, blooming woman. Her penance of silence did not deprive her of a single charm. She was so very happy, indeed, that she did not seem to feel even the pain of her punishment. Veile could laugh and rejoice, but never did she forget to be silent. The seemingly happy days, however, were only qualified to bring about the proper time of trials and temptations. The beginning was easy enough for her, the middle and end were times of real pain. The first years of their wedded life were childless. "It is well," the people in

the *gasse* said, "that she has no children, and God has rightly ordained it to be so. A mother who cannot talk to her child, that would be something awful!" Unexpectedly to all, she rejoiced one day in the birth of a daughter. And when that affectionate young creature, her own offspring, was laid upon her breast, and the first sounds were uttered by its lips—that nameless, eloquent utterance of an infant—she forgot herself not; she was silent!

She was silent also when from day to day that child blossomed before her eyes into fuller beauty. Nor had she any words for it when, in effusions of tenderness, it stretched forth its tiny arms, when in burning fever it sought for the mother's hand. For days—yes, weeks—together she watched at its bedside. Sleep never visited her eyes. But she ever remembered her penance.

Years fled by. In her arms she carried another child. It was a boy. The father's joy was great. The child inherited its mother's beauty. Like its sister, it grew in health and strength. The noblest, richest mother, they said, might be proud of such children!

And Veile was proud, no doubt, but this never passed her lips. She remained silent about things which mothers in their joy often cannot find words enough to express. And although her face many times lighted up with beaming smiles, yet she never renounced the habitual silence imposed upon her.

The idea that the slightest dereliction of her penance would be accompanied with a curse upon her children may have impressed itself upon her mind. Mothers will understand better than other persons what this mother suffered from her penalty of silence.

Thus a part of those years sped away which we are wont to call the best. She still flourished in her wonderful beauty. Her maiden daughter was beside her, like the bud beside the full-blown rose. Suitors were already present from far and near, who passed in review before the beautiful girl. The most of them were excellent young men, and any mother might have been proud in having her own daughter sought by such. Even then Veile did not undo her penance. Those busy times of intercourse which keep

mothers engaged in presenting the superiorities of their daughters in the best light were not allowed her. The choice of one of the most favored suitors was made. Never before did any couple in the *gasse* equal this in beauty and grace. A few weeks before the appointed time for the wedding a malignant disease stole on, spreading sorrow and anxiety over the greater part of the land. Young girls were principally its victims. It seemed to pass scornfully over the aged and infirm. Veile's daughter was also laid hold upon by it. Before three days had passed there was a corpse in the house—the bride!

Even then Veile did not forget her penance. When they bore away the corpse to the "good place," she did utter a cry of anguish which long after echoed in the ears of the people; she did wring her hands in despair, but no one heard a word of complaint. Her lips seemed dumb forever. It was then, when she was seated on the low stool in the seven days of mourning, that the rabbi came to her, to bring to her the usual consolation for the dead. But he did not speak with her. He addressed words only to her hus-

band. She herself dared not look up. Only when he turned to go did she lift her eyes. They, in turn, met the eyes of the rabbi, but he departed without a farewell.

After her daughter's death Veile was completely broken down. Even that which at her time of life is still called beauty had faded away within a few days. Her cheeks had become hollow, her hair gray. Visitors wondered how she could endure such a shock, how body and spirit could hold together. They did not know that that silence was an iron fetter firmly imprisoning the slumbering spirits. She had a son, moreover, to whom, as to something last and dearest, her whole being still clung.

The boy was thirteen years old. His learning in the Holy Scriptures was already celebrated for miles around. He was the pupil of the rabbi, who had treated him with a love and tenderness becoming his own father. He said that he was a remarkable child, endowed with rare talents. The boy was to be sent to Hungary, to one of the most celebrated teachers of the times, in order to lay the foundation for his sacred

studies under this instructor's guidance and wisdom. Years might perhaps pass before she would see him again. But Veile let her boy go from her embrace. She did not say a blessing over him when he went; only her lips twitched with the pain of silence.

Long years expired before the boy returned from the strange land, a full-grown, noble youth. When Veile had her son with her again a smile played about her mouth, and for a moment it seemed as if her former beauty had enjoyed a second spring. The extraordinary ability of her son already made him famous. Wheresoever he went people were delighted with his beauty, and admired the modesty of his manner, despite such great scholarship.

The next Sabbath the young disciple of the Talmud, scarcely twenty years of age, was to demonstrate the first marks of this great learning.

The people crowded shoulder to shoulder in this great synagogue. Curious glances were cast through the lattice-work of the women's gallery above upon the dense throng. Veile occupied one of the foremost

seats. She could see everything that took place below. Her face was extremely pale. All eyes were turned towards her — the mother, who was permitted to see such a day for her son! But Veile did not appear to notice what was happening before her. A weariness, such as she had never felt before, even in her greatest suffering, crept over her limbs. It was as if she must sleep during her son's address. He had hardly mounted the stairs before the ark of the laws—hardly uttered his first words—when a remarkable change crossed her face. Her cheeks burned. She arose. All her vital energy seemed aroused. Her son meanwhile was speaking down below. She could not have told what he was saying. She did not hear him—she only heard the murmur of approbation, sometimes low, sometimes loud, which came to her ears from the quarters of the men. The people were astonished at the noble bearing of the speaker, his melodious speech, and his powerful energy. When he stopped at certain times to rest it seemed as if one were in a wood swept by a storm. She could now and then hear a few voices

declaring that such a one had never before been listened to. The women at her side wept; she alone could not. A choking pain pressed from her breast to her lips. Forces were astir in her heart which struggled for expression. The whole synagogue echoed with buzzing voices, but to her it seemed as if she must speak louder than these. At the very moment her son had ended she cried out unconsciously, violently throwing herself against the lattice-work:

"God! living God! shall I not now speak?" A dead silence followed this outcry. Nearly all had recognized this voice as that of the "silent woman." A miracle had taken place!

"Speak! speak!" resounded the answer of the rabbi from the men's seats below. "You may now speak!"

But no reply came. Veile had fallen back into her seat, pressing both hands against her breast. When the women sitting beside her looked at her they were terrified to find that the "silent woman" had fainted. She was dead! The unsealing of her lips was her last moment.

Long years afterwards the rabbi died. On his death-bed he told those standing about him this wonderful penance of Veile.

Every girl in the *gasse* knew the story of the "silent woman."

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THE END.

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